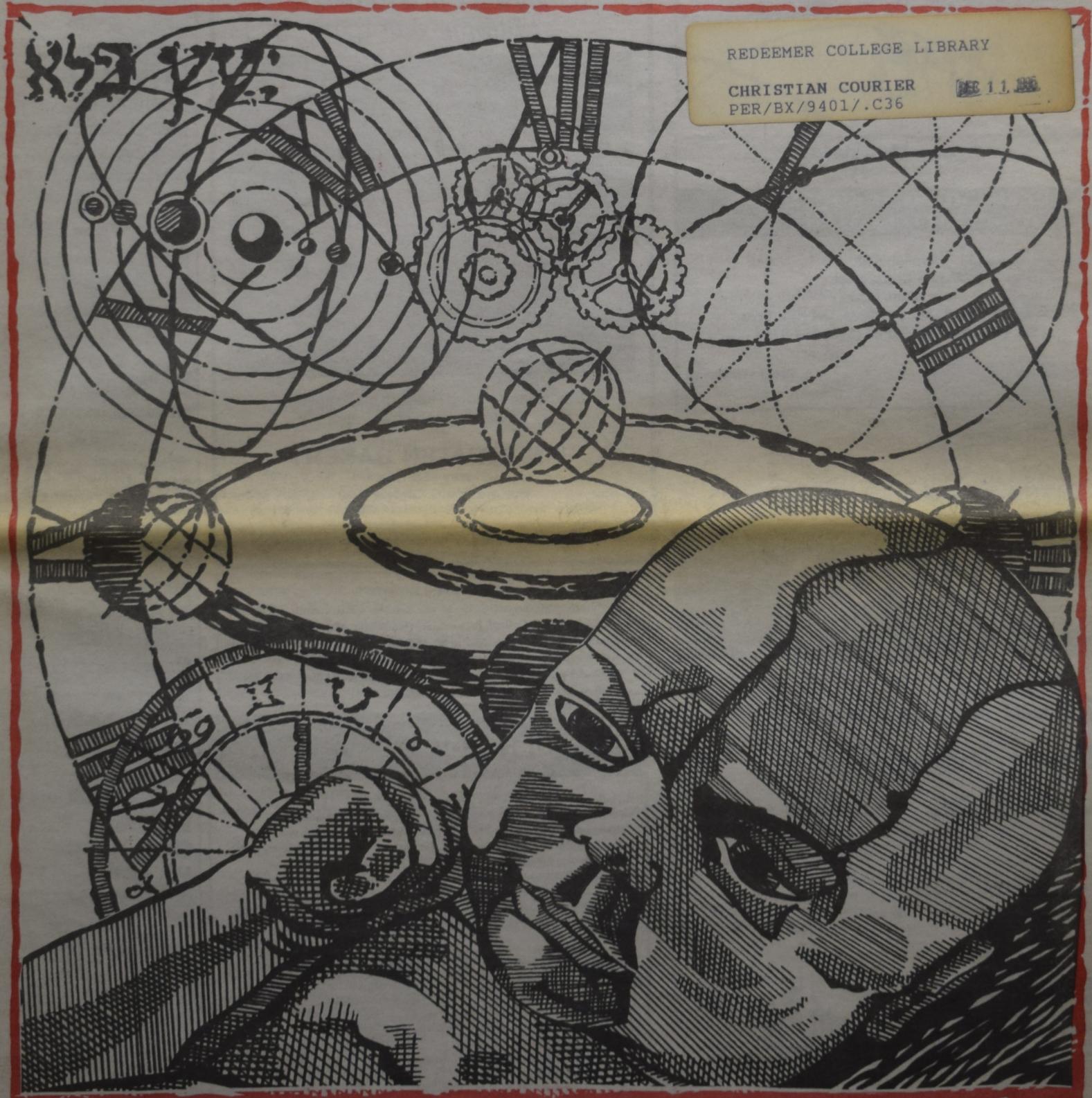


Christian Courier

A REFORMED WEEKLY

DECEMBER 8, 1995/No. 2467



LIKE A STONE ON THE SURFACE OF A STILL RIVER,
DRIVING THE RIPPLES ON FOREVER;
REDEMPTION RIPS THROUGH THE SURFACE OF TIME,
IN THE CRY OF A TINY BABE. — BRUCE COCKBURN

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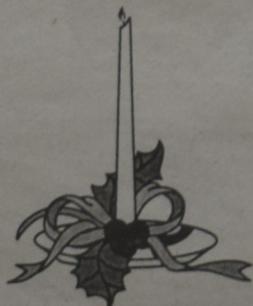
Front-page artwork

This year's Christmas issue cover was done by Chris Cuthill, a fifth-year student at Redeemer College in Ancaster, Ont., Chris, who lives in Binbrook (near Hamilton), pursues a major in art and theatre. He hopes to study for his Master's degree at the Institute for Christian Studies next year.

The sketch pictures Christ ripping through the surface of time. The Hebrew text suggests the law and the reason for Christmas.

We wish our members a
Blessed Christmas Season
and a Healthy New Year

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The secret of Christmas

Pam de Jong

Christmas can be a time of great pressure and stress. People often try to do too much. They overeat, drink excessively or stay up late too many nights in a row and then wonder why the holiday wasn't as much fun as they expected it to be. Everyone wants Christmas to be a perfect, happy time, but few people have the time or energy to live up to the story book ideal.

It's ironic that we should expect perfection at Christmas. After all, the very first Christmas was full of messed-up plans, right from the beginning. An unexpected pregnancy would be difficult enough to deal with, but on top of that, at nine months Mary had to take a donkey trip to Bethlehem and then have the baby in a barn.

Yet the unusual circumstances of Jesus' birth are part of what made it so special, and the joy and hope generated on that day has not diminished in 2000 years.

Unplanned memorable experience

One of the most memorable Christmases I ever had did not go according to plan at all. One year, back when my brothers and I were still living at home, my oldest brother planned to fly to Montreal to spend Christmas with his girlfriend and her family. His plane was scheduled to leave on Christmas Eve and the whole family went along with him to the airport. It was a breathtaking cold day, and the snow squeaked under our feet like styrofoam. As we got on the freeway, more snow started

to come down. The flakes seemed to get sucked into the headlights as we drove along, and they came faster and faster.

When we arrived at the check-in counter my brother was told that the weather was causing delays and it might be several hours before his plane was ready to go. He was instructed to stay in the airport and was given a food voucher for the restaurant. We couldn't leave him all alone on Christmas Eve, so we found a table in the crowded restaurant and prepared for a long wait.

As we ate we found ourselves reminiscing about other Christmases we had spent together and experiences we had shared over the years. We were really enjoying ourselves, sipping hot chocolate and watching the snowplows outside race up and down the runways. There was nothing we had to do, so we talked as we had not talked in years. We were free from the usual Christmas distractions and didn't have to worry about any last minute details; there were no gifts to be wrapped, no food to prepare, nowhere to rush off to.

We were almost sorry when, far into the night, my brother's plane was called. We had almost forgotten what brought us there in the first place. We saw him off and stepped outside into the freezing air. The sky was clear now and the snow sparkled brilliantly in the moonlight. The fresh, clean snow muffled every sound and the roads were completely deserted. The world seemed truly peaceful. As we headed home we sleepily sang carols in the car.

All of us remember this as one of the most meaningful ways we have ever celebrated Christmas.

The secret of Christmas (and of life, for that matter) is taking joy in what is close at hand, as

my family did at the airport without even realizing it at the time.

We needn't expect anything beyond the day itself and the fact that we can celebrate it. The holiday may not turn out

the way we dreamed it would be, but chances are we will find special meaning while doing the simplest activities and in the most unlikely places.

Pam de Jong lives in Surrey, B.C.

One of us?

"For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26).

There's a song I've been hearing on the radio lately called "One of Us." It's sung by Joan Osborne and it's a song of theological speculation. It starts with some questions:

If God had a face, what would it look like?

If God had a name, what would it be,

and would you want to know it if it meant you had to believe?

Then, there's a section of what-if wondering. What if God were just like us?

If God was one of us

Just a slob like one of us

Just a stranger on a bus

Trying to make his way home

Up to heaven all alone....

The paradox of the Incarnation is that it underscores both God's affinity with us and his infinite distance from us. In becoming a human being, God in Christ meets us with an intimacy which is alarming. He becomes Immanuel, "God with us." He undergoes all the indignities of being human: suffering pain, misunderstanding, loss, grief, disappointment, betrayal and death. As the author of Hebrews tells us, "He had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect" (2:17).

Almost we are tempted to believe that he has become "just a slob like one of us." Especially at Christmas, when we think of Jesus as a helpless baby in a manger, it is easy to feel very comfortable with him, as just another infant to be cooed over and admired. Even when we imagine Jesus as an adult, we often reduce him to a non-judgmental peer, a best friend who will always understand and give loving support because he's been there.

Amazing paradox

But God does not come to be with us in Christ because he is one of us. He comes because he is wholly other. We are weak, powerless over the circumstances of our lives. He is great, creating and maintaining the cosmos with a word, yet knowing each person who will ever live by name. We are inevitably caught in our own sinfulness, constantly hurting each other and ourselves despite all our best intentions. He is good, so that his very nature compels him to love.

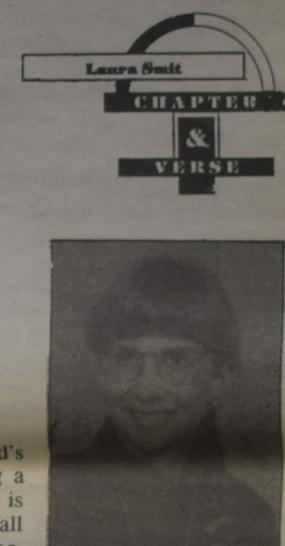
There is no other being in all creation who is less "one of us" than God. It is this distance from us which makes him both willing and able to save us through the act of the Incarnation. One drowning person cannot save another. One lost stranger on a bus cannot welcome the other strangers home. We need to be rescued by one who breaks in from the outside, with both a power and a love which are missing from the lives we would create on our own.

A vision of that face

Osborne never finishes her "what if" sentence. An "if" suggests a "then," something she does not provide. But the chorus affirms, "Yeah, yeah, God is great. Yeah, yeah, God is good." The repeated yeahs sound to me like a series of amens. God is *not* one of us. Instead, he is the One who is at once great and good. God is *not* lost in the world, trying to make his way home to heaven. Instead, he is making his way to us, coming to find us, befriend us and rescue us.

Because he has come, we know that God does have a face. It is the face of Christ, and someday we will have a vision of that face whose beauty, goodness and truth will meet every longing of our hearts. Because he has come, we know that God does not have a name. It is Jesus, and in that name we are authorized to pray and to count ourselves children of God.

Thank God that he is not one of us. Thank God that Christ has come instead to make us one of his.



"The holiday may not turn out the way we dreamed it would be, but chances are we will find special meaning while doing the simplest activities and in the most unlikely places."

Laura Smit is a minister in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and is currently doing doctoral work in philosophical aesthetics at Boston University, Boston, Mass.

Christmas Editorial

Seven woes by fax from heaven

While Jesus was on earth, he at one time pronounced seven woes on the leaders of his country. What would Jesus say today to the leaders of our country? It's tricky to predict that because who can really speak for Jesus? Nevertheless, I have let my imagination and knowledge of society work together to produce seven woes for our times, relying for structure on Matthew 23 and 24.

To: the world

From: Jesus

Date: December 25, 1995

Total number of pages: 2

Dear World:

The reason I'm sending you this fax is because things have not improved since I came

to earth almost 2,000 years ago and left it 33 years later. At that time, most people did not recognize me and chose the darkness rather than the light. What is different today? What would they say if I asked them, "What do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he?"

Too many people do not have the love of God in their hearts. Instead of loving their neighbor as themselves, they love themselves first, and if there's anything left they will share with their most immediate neighbor on a tit-for-tat basis.

To my followers I say, "The greatest among you will be your servant. Those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Woe to you, people, who claim to be enlightened! You say, 'If anyone commits adultery, it's alright, as long as it is between consenting adults; but if anyone spanks a child, he or she is guilty of physical abuse.' You blind fools! Which is greater: the secret hand of lust or the loving hand of correction?

Woe to you, teachers of a secular curriculum. You say that education is neutral and that you are responsible only for the facts. But you have neglected the more important matters — a child's faith, moral values and the purpose of learning and life. You should have taught the latter and admit to your own belief system. You blind guides! Calling yourself educators — people who lead students out of ignorance. You make them twice as ignorant as they were before.

Woe to you, politicians. You are called to be leaders in justice and equity. Instead you are preoccupied with power, focusing on image and polls. Why don't you find out what your society really needs, and commit yourself to responsible governing. Why don't you recognize the plight of the Natives and the unemployed. Instead you focus on pleasing other power brokers and you trample on the rights of minorities. You fools! Fill up, then, the measure of your sin.

Woe to you, members of the press. You are supposed to be communicators of truth. Instead you mislead people with your secular bias and your politically correct and commercially profitable agenda. You focus on the sensational instead of on what has real significance. You intrude into people's private lives with the excuse that the public has the right to know. You liars! How will you escape being condemned to hell?

Woe to you, bank executives. You charge your customers for every little transaction and make it hard for small businesses to get loans. Yet your profits are in the billions and you vote

yourself fat salary increases. You clean the outside of your corporate image but inside your vaults are full of greed and self-indulgence. First clean up your inside policies, and then the outside will also be clean.

Woe to you, peddlers of religion and salvation. You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are. You run expensive campaigns to fund your glitzy television programs so that your rating goes up. You hypocrites! Why don't you trust the Holy Spirit to bring more people to God?

Woe to you, corporate giants. You are intent on gaining monopolies, specializing in take-overs. You kill small enterprises and treat your workers as expendable commodities. You profit from low wages in Third-World countries and take advantage of their lax pollution laws. You claim to bring prosperity and progress to these countries but you kill their infrastructures and their native cultures. You snakes! You brood of vipers! Upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth.

I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation.

"The greatest among you will be your servant."

World, world, how often have I not longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you decided to abort or neglect them. Look, your economy is left in ruins, your environment is degraded and you kill each other with guns or unfair trade policies.

I tell you, the day is coming that I will return. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

Who then are the faithful and wise servants in the '90s, whom the master has put in charge of a part of the creation, to be good stewards and caretakers of people, animals, plants and soil? It will be good for those servants whose master finds them so doing when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put them in charge of all his possessions.

BW

Christian Courier

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Letters

Consistency in views makes us constructive and honest

I appreciated Bill Van Dyk's article cautioning us not to accept uncritically every communication that comes under the heading of "family values" (Nov. 17). We do need to examine the content of these pronouncements based on biblical principles.

Van Dyk focuses on James Dobson in his article, commenting in particular on Dobson's vehement criticism of the women's conference in Beijing. An instructive contrast to Dobson's approach to the Beijing conference comes from the Catholic Church.

In a recent edition of the *Western Catholic Reporter*, Dolores Curran (who writes a very insightful column called, "Talks with Parents") contrasted Dobson's strident tone with the much more pastoral letter to women at the conference written by the Pope. She quotes the Pope as follows:

I cannot fail to express my admiration for those women of good will who have devoted their lives to defending the dignity of womanhood by fighting for their basic social, economic and political rights, demonstrating courageous initiative at a time when this was considered extremely inappropriate.

In all these areas a greater presence of women in society will prove most valuable, for it will help to manifest the contradictions present when society is organized solely according to the criteria of efficiency and productivity....

Willing to participate

Instructive, too, is the Vatican's approach to the Beijing conference, summarized by Mary Ann Glendon, head of the Vatican delegation. She stated that the Pope was trying to build on what is

truthful and constructive, and was honest about those areas where there was disagreement. By its willingness to participate, the Vatican played an important role in shaping the final document from the conference.

It is not only the tone of discourse that is markedly different between Dobson and the Vatican delegation, but also the views on family values represented in their approaches. The Vatican strongly supported the Beijing document's sections aimed at eliminating poverty, promoting development and expanding the access women have to education. It strongly opposed the document's section on health because it disagreed with its attitude toward sexuality.

Consistent perspective

Rather than focusing narrowly on the issues of sexuality, Mary Ann Glendon

explains that *both* the support for eliminating poverty and the opposition to the document's approach to sexuality come out of the *same* biblical teaching: the inherent dignity of the human person.

Glendon labelled as "cafeteria Catholics" both those who think the church's social teaching is central to the faith and its teaching on sexuality is optional, and those who allow no room for dissent on the teaching on sexuality but think the social teachings are just guidelines. The two are inseparable responses to our inherent dignity as God's imagebearers.

The Catholic presence at the conference represented a much more consistent and wholistic approach to women's issues and family values. What Dobson and others can learn from this approach is that poverty, violence against women,

child abuse and global inequities that fall hardest on women and children are family issues.

Use same approach to Dobson

If we are consistent, we must also use this approach in our very critique of Focus on the Family. We should build on what in that movement is truthful and constructive, and offer constructive critique to that with which we disagree.

The aspect of Dobson's work that I find most problematic is his letters to his supporters. They are often rather strident and very partisan politically.

On the other hand, we can also find valuable resources produced by Focus on the Family. The organization produces many helpful resources for families, including magazines for children and young people, videos, books and so on. And Dobson is much more supportive of single-parent families than many of his religious counterparts in the U.S., and publishes a magazine especially for single parents.

New family is church

Finally, while valuing families, we must be careful not to worship them. One consequence of idolizing families can be that we isolate family life from the larger Kingdom task that we all share. As Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen has pointed out:

Jesus' own life and teachings underscore the fact that marriage and family now take a back seat to the universal proclamation of God's salvation and the formation of a new first family — a worldwide, Kingdom-building company in which membership depends not on bloodlines, but on faith in the Messiah.

The new family of God in the New Testament is not the nuclear family, but the church, the Body of Christ.

Stephanie Baker Collins
St. Catharines, Ont.

Do we recognize rights based on the sword?

I was struck with your opening line in the editorial "The death of a prince of peace called Yitzhak" (Nov. 17), which read: "As long as the injustice of preventing the Palestinians from having their own homeland persisted...."

I am wondering which party is preventing whom from having a homeland in Palestine, and whether any people on this earth can claim a homeland that has been obtained without some injustice toward other people living there before.

My recollection of history indicates that for many years the Jews have migrated back to Palestine. This migration became so large after the Second World War that conflicts with the Palestinians living there became such a problem that the United Nations decided to partition the country with the formation of the state of Israel and the rest of the

country being added to the state of Jordan. Was this justice?

Both the Israelis and the Palestinians could claim the country as their homeland. Both had obtained the country in the past through conquest. It was thus no wonder that this partition resulted in more warfare, as we have seen during the last 50-odd years.

Through these wars the state of Israel has conquered the Sinai, the Gaza strip, the Golan Heights and the Westbank, including Jerusalem. The Israelis now claim that they've got their own homeland back, while the Palestinians claim that the whole country is theirs and that the Israelis are intruders into their country and must be thrown out.

Where do we as Christians draw the line? Do we recognize rights based on the power of the sword, the bow and arrow or the gun? Does our God give

each one of us a place to live and a country to live in using those unjust means?

Without being judgmental, it seems to me that Yitzhak Rabin had judged the time to be ripe to come to a compromise with the Palestinians in giving them their homelands in the Gaza strip and the Westbank, in exchange for their recognition of the state of Israel in the remaining land. This effort to make peace is far from easy. Many Palestinians, as well as Israelis, still want the whole country, and the city of Jerusalem and the Golan Heights may remain stumbling blocks.

We can, however, only pray that God may bless these efforts to obtain a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians, and that both people can live and work together as neighbors in the near future.

Nick Dykstra
Belleville, Ont.

Hands need a rest

Just a comment on "Reflection" by Nick Loenen (C.C., Oct. 27).

Thank you Nick for your reflection on worship. My hands, too, need a rest, while I come in God's presence to receive a personal inner experience.

Entertainment is not required and we can shake hands after the service.

The traditional worshippers are slowly squeezed out of the CRC.

Joe Boersma
Waterloo, Ont.



Christmas greetings from the C C staff

The staff of *Christian Courier*: from l. to r.: Stan de Jong, Alan Doerksen, Grace Bowman, Bert Witvoet, Marian Van Til and Ingrid Torn.

*Write it down! Lay it out!
Publish it abroad!
Tell all the readers of
Christian Courier
that Jesus Christ is the
Word become flesh
and that from his grace we
have all received
one blessing after another.*



**We wish you
a Word-filled
Christmas
and a
Word-directed
New Year!**



Joy

to the

world

the

Lord

is come!



*Best wishes for a joyous holiday season
from the staff and ministries of the
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Acceptable Yuletide song

For all those politically correct-minded folks, the new version of "Deck the Halls."

Deck the halls with boughs of non-endangered plant species,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

'Tis the season to be self-actualizing,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

Don we now our alternate lifestyle apparel,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

Toll the ancient, non-denominational-winter-solstice-holiday-carol,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

See the blazing log of non-denominational-winter-solstice-holiday-
non-endangered wood before us,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

Play the harp without unnecessary brutality, and join the chorus,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

Sing we emotionally stable in a collective group effort,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

Heedless of the weather patterns despite the effects of global-warming,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

Fast away the mature year passes,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

Hail the new year without any implicit ageism, ye persons,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

Dance in a non-hierarchical manner in merry measure,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

While I tell of non-materialistic, non-denominational-winter-solstice-holiday
treasure,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

Passed on by Esther Barnes, past-president of CCP and editor of *The Link and Visitor*.



Bird on a string



Illustrations by Jeannie Merkel, Norfolk, Virginia

Beatrice Vandervelde

Heather was fuming. The nerve! Calling her a mouse. She was so angry she could cheerfully have squashed a grape.

She and Mary had just had a dilly of a fight. They had had lots of them lately, but this time her best friend said some nasty things and then topped it all by accusing: "You're just jealous, that's what you are. You... you... mouse!" Mary had stormed off in a huff, slamming doors behind her.

Heather punched the pillow a few times, then settled herself on the bed. Sure, she was jealous. She had every right to be. She had tried so hard to get one of the parts in the Christmas play. But again, Mrs.

D. had chosen Mary.

She got up to brush her shoulder-length blonde hair. Static made it stand up like a halo. Some mouse! No wonder Dad always kidded her about being his angel. Well, she certainly didn't feel like an angel. She sprayed her brush with hairspray, a tip from her friendly hairdresser. Bye, bye, halo.

She grimaced into the mirror, then spun away from her image and headed for her violin. Barely taking time to tighten the bow, she whipped it back and forth across the strings. Shrieks and squawks grated on her ears, echoing the turmoil she felt inside herself. Gradually, though, the discords made way for scales and familiar warm-up patterns, the frenzied playing slowed and became smoother.

It was murder to start off so softly at just the right pitch but

the notes clear. She stopped, tuned her instrument, and turned to her lesson.

In addition to a classical piece, she was studying several Christmas carols. Two selections were to be chosen for the parent night her music teacher always organized in early December. One carol Heather wanted to play was absolutely awesome. She remembered a record her parents had of some boys' choir in England performing that song. A single voice began, softly, softly, but so clear and pure that you felt the singer was there that night, all alone, to witness the birth. Gradually the voice swelled to rich, full notes and other voices joined in. The singing was so beautiful she shivered with goosebumps every time she heard the song or even thought of it.

As Heather practices the carol now, she tried to imitate that voice. At the same time, she could hear her music teacher's comments, could see the gestures, hands going round and round in ever larger circles to indicate the increase in volume she wanted to hear. In her mind Heather pictured a whole orchestra joining her instead of a lone piano.

It was murder to start off so

she wanted it to sound just like the record. Better, even. She wanted to play *that* carol at the music program. Again and again she began the piece, until she forgot all about her friend, Mary, as her violin sang about Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the birth of her little child.

They avoided each other the rest of the week. It was easy enough, with Mary spending all her spare time at practices. But Friday night Heather had to make a decision. It was "family night" at the arena and for years a whole group from school had made it a tradition to go ice skating there. Normally she stopped by Mary's house and they walked down together. Should she, or shouldn't she?

Skates slung over her shoulders, shoes swishing through remnants of dry and curled leaves, she walked along, trying to decide. For some reason her thoughts turned to Grandma. "Life's too short to hold grudges," she'd probably say. No doubt she would also remind Heather that friends are precious and not to be discarded at a whim.

Heather crossed the street and rearranged her skates. Actually it was silly to be jealous. She was far too busy practising for the music recital to have a special part in the school program as well. She was playing her violin piece over and over, polishing it until she could almost go through the whole carol without even thinking — the sound just seemed to appear, her fingers moving to the right places on the strings as if programmed.

Before she was quite aware of it, she was at Mary's door. Her friend seemed surprised but pleased to see her and scrambled to get ready. Moments later they walked down the street side by side. After a while Heather asked, "How's it going?"

Mary shrugged. "Okay," she grunted. With her foot she scooped aside a pile of leaves and sent them flying. A half block later she let out a huge sigh and complained, "Actually, it's a drag. All I do is sit but I have to be at all the practices. Just think, from now till the

Christmas program, no free noon hours."

"Come on! You must do more than just sit. Even a mouse like me could do that," Heather blurted.

Mary stopped short. "That's not fair," she retorted. "You know I didn't mean that the other day. I was just mad."

"So it's okay to call people names whenever you're mad?"

"Heather! Can we drop it? I'm sorry."

They walked on in silence. Mary sighed again, then added sarcastically, "Yes, I do more. In the opening scene I walk as if I'm really tired." She dropped her shoulders and dragged her feet to demonstrate.

"You have to look pregnant, too, you know," Heather reminded her. "Kind of like this." She put her hand in the small of her back and threw her stomach forward.

Mary snorted.

"Well, that's how my aunt walks when she's great with child," Heather defended herself.

They giggled and suddenly the uncomfortable feeling between them was gone, swept away like leaves before the wind.

BY mid-November everyone at school knew his or her lines and each class knew its carols. Now it was just a matter of putting it all together to see where things fit. At the first general rehearsal, Mrs. D. ran around with a flushed face, prompting, encouraging, warning.

Afterwards she warned, "The play is short, though. We need some...." She raised her voice to be heard above the growing babble but it was no use. Finally waving a dismissal, she watched her charges bolt for the doors.

Later, as they walked home together, Mary asked, "Are you going to?"

"Going to what?"

"You know, play at the program."

"They need a mouse?" Heather quipped.

Mary whirled on her friend. One hand on her hip, eyes flashing, she hissed through clenched teeth, "Heather, we

Continued on page 9...



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Bird on a string

...continued from page 7
settled that."

"Sorry," Heather shot back. Sometimes she enjoyed bugging Mary a bit. With a toss of the head she inquired innocently, "What are you talking about?"

"Are you going to play?"

"Play my violin?" Heather frowned. "Of course. I have to."

"What do you mean, you have to?"

"My music teacher says we need all the opportunities we can get to play in front of audiences. So yes, I have to."

"Well, great!" Mary said. "Then we each have a part."

"How's the music coming?" Mary asked several times over the next weeks.

"Almost set," Heather answered. Just that week her music teacher had decreed: "You're ready — it's smooth, you've got all the right notes, and the increase in dynamics is perfect." But then at the last session she had cautioned, "Don't make it too mechanical, Heather. Remember the awe and wonder Mary must have felt that night. Try to put in some of that." She flashed a smile to smooth the critique.

Heather remembered. She felt a little nervous when it was her turn to play at the recital but she played with feeling — the goosebumps were back.

"Beautiful," her parents praised. "You were as natural as a bird."

"Well, I didn't feel like a bird. I'm glad it's over," Heather sighed. She didn't envy Mary one bit. Performing in public took a lot of nerve.

"What are you going to wear to the Christmas program?" Mary asked one day as they sloshed home through wet streets which would probably turn to ice overnight.

Heather shrugged. "The regular, I suppose. What about you?"

"Oh, I'll just dress for the part," Mary said dismissively. "But you, you'll be centre-stage. Want to wear something stunning? Want to borrow something of mine? My red dress? My new mini?" Mary had a way with clothes, a knack for dressing up the ordinary to make it look really special — a dart or tuck here, a belt, a pin, a scarf.

But Heather laughed at her. "Who'd notice?" she chuckled. "In the middle of the choir? Be-

sides, Mrs. D. would never allow it."

Mary frowned. "What do you mean?" she said abruptly.

"What do you mean, what do I mean?" Heather chuckled. She saw Mary's face and asked, "Am I missing something?"

Mary turned on her. "Heather, you're playing your violin at the school program. Sure. Birds just chirp and whistle away. They don't worry whether their song sounds beautiful or not. We'll pretend we're birds tonight — forget about how we sound. We're birds, praising God, thanking him for the gift of music and for the gift of his Son."

Birds.

chance to pass up." However, in the next breath she worried, "Who can play with you, though? I'm afraid I'll be gone the rest of this month. Are any of your friends good enough to accompany you?"

In the end, it was Heather's dad who settled himself behind

nervously, then wiped them on her jeans. This was ten times worse than the music program. Why had she agreed to it?

She sighed as she looked at the three outfits on the bed. Mary wanted her to wear something glamorous but she wasn't sure.

her parents' praise after the recital. "But I'm not..."

"Hey, great idea!" her Dad interrupted with a chuckle. "Let's pretend we're birds. Sure. Birds just chirp and whistle away. They don't worry whether their song sounds beautiful or not. We'll pretend we're birds tonight — forget about how we sound. We're birds, praising God, thanking him for the gift of music and for the gift of his Son."



the piano to practice with her. "Rather rusty," he apologized. "I should play more often. I used to enjoy it a lot. Played at Young People's hymn sings all the time."

"Calm down," Mary warned. "Don't you turn hyper on me." She paused, then pleaded, "You've been practising. Couldn't you play your recital piece? You know that. You've already played it in front of an audience. Try it, Heather. Please!"

Heather had a hard time falling asleep that night; strange dreams troubled her. Her very first thought the next morning was: Should she play? They were counting on her but she hadn't committed herself. She could still back out.

"Oh, but it's a wonderful opportunity, Heather," her violin teacher agreed. "Too good a

Finally, she settled on her own dusky broomstick skirt and a plain white cotton blouse. She'd fit right into the choir afterwards.

The clothes issue settled, she tuned her violin one more time and went through the opening bars. She knew her piece cold. But what would happen when she stood in front of the large audience tonight? Would she be able to keep her knees from knocking? Would her fingers move to the right places then?

There was a tap on the door and her dad stuck his head around the corner. "Sounds great, Angel. All set?" he asked.

"I guess. A bit nervous." He nodded. "I know what you mean. Remember, though, you've played it before. You were a natural."

"Yeah, natural as a bird," Heather scoffed, remembering

An eighth grader started the program by playing "Oh, Canada" on the trumpet. When he was finished and the audience had settled, Heather walked to the middle of the gym stage, a heavy drum beat accompanying her every step.

She frowned slightly. That hadn't been planned. But suddenly it dawned on her. My goodness! It was her heart, her very own heart, thumping like a drum. Everyone would hear.

In panic she glanced down at her dad, seated by the piano. He held her glance with a steady gaze, then purposefully, almost mischievously, looked up at the rafters and puckered his lips into a whistle.

For a split second she didn't comprehend. Then she almost burst out laughing. It was so preposterous to think of Dad as a bird. She breathed deeply, smiling, while a wonderful calm rippled through her.

Placing her violin in position, she closed her eyes and put her bow to the strings. She counted to four, then lovingly coaxed the notes into being, soft and pure: "Once in Royal David's city...."

As the song came to life under her bow, she pictured the scene as it would be enacted in just a few minutes by the whole school: Mary walking onto the stage the way they'd practised, reaching the cattle shed, and then some of the grades singing songs about Jesus's birth. She imagined the animals around the manger, and there, perched in the rafters, to her amazement and delight, a bird, head cocked to sing.

She glanced at her dad. He winked and their song took flight.

Beatrice Vandervelde is a teacher and writer living in Willowdale, Ont.

Music

A very old-time Christmas

Thys Yool: A Medieval Christmas.

Martin Best Ensemble.

Nimbus. NI 5137. Playing time: 64:07.

The Martin Best ensemble is known for its vivid authentic performance of early music and its distinctive blend of five voices and many instruments (lute, psaltery, rebecs, fiddles, recorders, pipes, transverse flute). These performances are flawless.

Four medieval images central to the Christmas story in

medieval Europe are brought together here: melancholy, earth-bound humanity longing for Life (*Winter and Wassail*); the Nativity itself (*A Child is Born*); Christian and pagan traditions combining in adoration of the Virgin, and human perceptions profoundly altered by Christ's coming (*Mary's Son, Good Will on Earth*); and a looking to *Rebirth*.

This music spans a period of 350 years; it ranges from haunting and ethereal to earthly human, from exuberant to meditative, opening a window

on the church in an early age. English texts or translations are provided for all 23 pieces. A fine choice for early music lovers.

A Christmas Legend: Resonet in Laudibus

Niederaltaicher Scholaren; Konrad Ruhland, conductor
Sony Classical. SK 66242. Playing time: 73:37.

The carol "Resonet in Laudibus" has appeared in more forms and languages since the 14th century than virtually any other carol: "Let Zion echo with praises and joyful noises,/For

he whom Mary bore has appeared to the faithful." The carol is also known as: "Joseph, Dearest Joseph, Mine"; "Jesu redemptor omnium"; "Dormi Jesu dulcissime"; and "Singet frisch und wohlgemut" ("Sing brightly and with gladness").

Putting 22 settings of essentially the same tune on one CD may seem mind-numbing. Not so! There is great variety here, in music composed from the late 1500s to 1624.

One setting is a simple *a capella* hymn; another is a five-voice canon; another an organ fugue. One is a seven-part motet for two choirs; a few employ one or several soloists;

or soloists alternating with choir and/or instruments. Several use brass choir *a la* Gabrielli; one is for viol consort. A couple are joyful, concerto-like pieces.

Interesting background information about the music is provided, as are texts in both the original languages and English. Unfortunately, we're told nothing about this superb chorus, most of whose members double as instrumentalists.

An advertising sticker on the CD cellophane said something like: "Renaissance and Baroque music lovers will appreciate this recording." Indeed they will.

We express our appreciation for your patronage and wish you all a very happy Christmas and a prosperous and blessed New Year.

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the kid, the calf and the lion and
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Arts/Media

All the way to Bethlehem

Joyful Noise Children's Choir and Voce Humana with Ken Medema

Marian Van Til



Tommy Banks, executive producer. CD or cassette. RC1-001 (cassette). To order see info elsewhere in this issue. Total playing time: 44:03.

The 56-member Joyful Noise Children's Choir has been a 17-year-long, much-loved hobby for its financial-planner director, Rein Selles.

This recording was made at Trinity Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton, along with Voce Humana, Trinity's 14-member "worship choir." Well-known singer/song-writer Ken Medema also participated. The project was a benefit for Rehoboth Christian Ministries. Proceeds are being used to "expand opportunities for mentally challenged children and adults in Alberta."

The 14 numbers here are arranged thematically around Christ's birth and its repercussions: *We Gather; The Promise; The Announcement; The Birth;*

The Word Goes Out; and He Was Born That We May Live.

If you like Christian contemporary music (CCM), you'll like this music. Ken Medema wrote two of the numbers, and Medema himself sings his song "Hush, Mrs. Teenage Mary." The works of about a dozen other CCM songwriters are featured, including two by Michael W. Smith.

Excellence must be pursued

The title song opens the album and is a lively medley of three carols — "O Come All Ye Faithful," "Away in a Manger" and "The First Nowell" — interspersed with material composed by Medema. A couple of numbers are out-and-out rock songs (e.g., Donley's "Isaiah 9:6"), but most are a lighter, upbeat pop style.

The kids sing enthusiasti-

ly. But unfortunately, the more "enthusiastically" they sing, the less musically they sing. There is little nuance here: at top dynamic levels the kids are near shouting; phrases aren't shaped; phrase endings are chopped; pitches are sometimes swooped at. This isn't Mozart, but these songs still deserve to be performed as musically as possible.

The most serious problem, however, is out-of-tune (flat) singing. It's evident that these kids have not been taught how to breathe properly, which in turn prevents correct vocal technique.

You may say: well, they're just kids. That's true; they are kids — that should be the beauty of it. Children's musical potential shouldn't be underestimated. There are thousands of amateur children's choruses throughout the world (never mind the kids trained at "choir

schools") which prove just how well children can sing if taught how.

Then too, if a choir embarks on a recording project, producing both cassettes and CDs, potential album buyers can rightly expect that there will be something extraordinary about that choir. And if it's a Christian choir, the pursuit of excellence should be a given. This choir needs to work at being extraordinary.

Not all is amiss here by any means. The spirit is definitely right; the kids' hearts — and faith — are obviously in it. It is the softer numbers, when the kids aren't pushing too hard, which are the most effective. And when nine individual choir members sing solos, they all do a good job of producing the agreeable, sweet sound of which children's voices are capable.

For more music reviews, see page 24

Liona Boyd: A guitar for Christmas

CBS. MK 37248. Produced by Eric Robertson. Total playing time: 34:17.

Canadian classical guitarist Liona Boyd initially came out with this Christmas CD in 1981, but CBS keeps making it available and it's still as popular as ever.

The 12 pieces here are competently arranged by either Boyd herself, by producer Eric Robertson, or by Boyd and Robertson together.

The style is what might be called lightly classical. Besides Boyd's solo guitar we hear string orchestra introductions or interludes on some numbers. On "What Child is This?" a recorder (blockflöte) weaves around the guitar line, and bells are used to begin the "Prelude on the Huron Carol"). A snare drum seems a necessity on "The Little Drummer Boy" and also adds to "A Parade of Toy Soldiers," the latter being an arrangement of Jeremiah Clarke's famous *Trumpet Tune in D*.

Besides the carols there are three pieces by Bach, all of which are likely to be familiar to most church-going music listeners: *In Dulci Jubilo* ("Good Christians All Rejoice"), *Sheep May Safely Graze* and the

chorale "Blessed Jesu, At Thy Word."

The other carols on the recording are: "O Come All Ye Faithful," "Deck the Halls" and "I Saw Three Ships," which make up the opening *Christmas Overture*; "Silent Night"; "The Holly and the Ivy" (part of a piece called *The Yuletide Garden*); "Away in a Manger"; and "Spanish Carol," a setting of the medieval Spanish "Riu, Riu, Chiu."



The only drawback to this pleasant recording is that it contains a scant 35 minutes of music. Blame CBS. That playing time is barely acceptable on a cassette and is totally unacceptable on a CD (though not unheard of, unfortunately). However, chances are good you'll find it priced lower than many CDs — which it should be.



A Romantic Christmas: John Tesh

GTS Records. 3-4569-2. Produced by Teshmusic. Total playing time: 56:55.

By now, if you know who John Tesh is, you probably know that he's more than a "pretty face" who used to be one of the anchors on the syndicated TV magazine "Entertainment Tonight." Tesh (who is married to actress Connie Selica) is a classically trained pianist; he also composes, in both classical and pop style. Most importantly, he and Connie are Christians.

The 16 tracks on this CD contain warmly romantic settings of traditional carols and classic songs, and two compositions by Tesh himself. The carols and songs are interpreted by orchestra (mostly), by solo piano, acoustic guitar and boys' choir. The tempos are all pretty laid back.

This is the perfect recording to put on around the house during this season to set a Christmas mood, to eat dinner by, or to hum or sing along with (if you know the words).

In the liner notes, Tesh includes a paragraph about each selection which tells about its origins or background. If you take the time to read this information it will increase both your knowledge and enjoyment of each song.

There's good variety in the arrangements, as well as from stanza to stanza of each carol or song. Solo instruments (often accompanied by strings) include acoustic guitar, violin, oboe, English horn, harp, cello and piano. The Paulist Boy Choristers of California sing — beautifully — on "Gesu Bambino," "Panis Angelicus," "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" and on an unexpected but effective selection, a plainchant "Gloria," accompanied by ethereal-sounding handbells.

Other carols included are: "O Little Town of Bethlehem"; "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear"; "The First Noel"; "Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella"; "O Come All Ye Faithful"; "The Coventry Carol"; "We Three Kings"; and "Silent Night."

Tesh's own two works ("The Homecoming" and "In a Child's Eyes") are semi-classical, mood-setting pieces for solo piano.

The album ends with the one secular piece included: a mellow setting of Mel Torme's old chestnut, "Chestnuts Roasting By the Fire," featuring a sax solo and electric keyboard accompaniment.

The CD liner notes say something about Tesh beyond what his music says: he includes a long list of thank yous, he names all the members of the boys' choir, and the last words come from Psalm 40:3 and Isaiah 9:2-7.



Solstice: the reason for the season?

In many communities, the revival of ancient pagan celebrations is competing with Christmas

Robert Parlante

Two weeks before Christmas, friends invited my wife and me to a winter solstice celebration at a large church in New York. It seemed innocent enough.

There was a simulated bonfire to illustrate the mystical change from darkness to light. Tambourines rattled as a choir raised their voices in songs rooted in Celtic tradition. Candle lightning announced the return of longer days on the earth.

Then the celebration began to feel strangely uncomfortable. *Where was the "Son-light" in all this? I thought.*

One person attending the performance said, "I'm a Christian, but solstice has more meaning for me than Christmas."

For him, solstice was the reason for the season. Winter light rituals had become more important than the celebration of Christ's birth.

I wondered if this man understood what he was saying. Behind all the festivity and symbols of solstice lurked a form of paganism that predated the first Christmas by thousands of years.

The cultural roots of solstice celebrations are varied. Modern solstice celebrations can be traced back to Scandinavian, Native American, Celtic, Asian and Egyptian lore.

'Neutral' celebration?

With cultural variations, the most common themes emphasize a connection with the life cycles of the earth and, specifically, the lengthening hours of sunlight after the darkest days of the year. The ancient Saturnalia, which celebrated the Roman god of agriculture, has also been co-opted into many solstice celebrations. The Saturnalia was often an unrestrained and licentious celebration.

Even the American Atheists Association supports the apparently more neutral solstice celebration as a means to embrace diversity of opinion during the holiday worship season. Solstice tries to gather us under one big umbrella. Never missing an opportunity, retailers offer solstice gifts, and

solstice greeting cards already bound.

How should Christians respond?

Every Christmas, Christians and entire cities face the debate about the public, government-sanctioned display of religious symbols.

Should a manger scene be displayed on public property? If we add a Jewish menorah, is it OK then? Maybe it is safer to ignore both, and go with the politically correct, generic

proclaiming solstice as the reason for the season. A spokesperson for the town said, "It's a public place, and everyone has the right to worship as they see fit."

Yes, it is a public place. And yes, we have a right to worship as we see fit. But the social and legal demands to remain neutral can lead to the conclusion that equal presentation means equal truth.

Christians need to guard against subtle accommodation

participation. Bonfires and evergreens may evoke comfortable memories of childhood camping trips, and most celebrations involve engaging artistry.

Be the best we can be

The Christmas message must compete against these well-produced solstice celebrations. In our pageants, we need to be the best we can for Christ. Not every church can present Handel's *Messiah*, but we all

celebration may offer a great show but it will lack the restoring power of God's love.

Solstice is not the reason for the season — Jesus is. In any season he will always be the one who transforms lives from darkness to light. His act of love is the only reason for celebration.

People who attend solstice celebrations may not understand personal restoration through Christ. They may be groping for spiritual significance. Seize the



winter scene.

Public displays recognizing solstice are a logical extension of that debate. Last year one northern New Jersey community allowed a solstice display on government property — after being threatened with a suit by the American Civil Liberties Union.

Guard against accommodation

Alongside the manger scene and a menorah stood a banner by the American Atheists

of thought that says all views are equal, even in our homes and sanctuaries. Solstice celebrations may provide a neutral territory against diverse opinion, but the Lord's message is not neutral. Christmas celebrations cannot be made neutral.

Solstice celebrations are appealing to many people, including some Christians. The presentations are frequently performed by professional troupes. Celebrations are interactive and encourage audience

can strive for excellence according to our gifts and abilities.

If someone has the choice of attending a solstice celebration or church pageant on a given evening, we would like them to choose Christmas. There is, of course, no contradiction between being Christian and presenting the best possible program.

But remember that even imperfect Christmas programs can possess beauty if the effort rises out of love for Jesus. A solstice

opportunity to reach out.

If you know someone who attended a solstice program, invite him to the best church Christmas pageant you can present. Encourage her to attend a church worship service during this special season. Send the person a Christmas card that rejoices in the birth of Jesus. Then pray that the Holy Spirit will touch that person's life.

Robert Parlante lives in Closter, New Jersey.



OK, there's no connection between Jesus and Santa



Ken Vandersluis

She caught me, right in front of the Halloween display. I had my hand on a bag of caramels. There was no denying it — it was obvious I was planning to participate in one of the most evil, devilish and darkest of our Canadian traditions.

"All Hallow's Eve," she called it.

She's Christian Reformed, you know, and she vaguely alluded to my Reformed heritage, as well, by warning me. "You can't be serious about allowing your children to participate in such an ungodly ritual, can you?" she asked, incredulously.

I wanted to make sure we were talking about the same "ungodly ritual," so I queried, "You mean when my kids ring our neighbor's doorbell, say 'trick or treat,' thank them for the candy they've received, then run to the next door?"

"Yes!" she exclaimed.

So, we were obviously talking about the same thing.

"That's ungodly behavior?" I asked. "Allowing my children to collect some goodies, spread them out over the living room floor, count them, eat some, count them again, arrange them into groups, go to bed with them, sleep with them until Dad tucks them in so he can grab a few for his lunch box? Does that sound like Satan worship?"

"Well, not really that part, no. But," she added, "don't you know how this whole business started?"

"What business?" I asked.

"Halloween," she said, "this business of Halloween."

I knew how and why Halloween had started, but I couldn't resist the temptation. "No," I said innocently, "tell me."

Children don't understand

Her face lit up, and she explained, with animated gestures, and holy zeal, the whole sordid history behind this contemptible event. When she was through, she viewed me expectantly, waiting for my concurrence.

"So you think my five-year-old should not put a turtle costume on or collect candy because of what some pagans did some hundred years ago?" I asked.

"Yes," she said, satisfied that she had finally reached me.

"I don't think my son would understand all of that," I objected rather lamely.

"That's just it," she said, smiling politely; "children do not understand the evil beginnings of this horrible tradition, we must...."

I let her finish. After she disappeared down another aisle, I estimated how many times my doorbell would ring, and how many "evil" smiles I would see through the masks and the make-up. Then I reached for another bag of caramels.

Being on guard throughout December

That was Halloween. I can hardly wait for Christmas. It will be open season on reindeer, Santa Claus, the Grinch, and Frosty.

The Christmas season follows right on the heels of Halloween, and being Christian Reformed means, of course, I'll have to be on guard throughout the month of December, as well. Handel's *Messiah* is allowed, while Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* might be missed. "Silent Night" is preferred over "Jingle Bells." The Wise Men fit in, but, Dancer, Prancer, and Vixen are out. Somehow in all this celebrating, or in the case of Halloween, the lack thereof, I cannot but feel patronized.

I'm told Halloween is something serious Christians should avoid. I'm encouraged to deny the existence of Santa Claus around this time of year, although I seem to recall that the Dutch had sort of a special day for old St. Nick. But, well, of course, that wasn't celebrated on the 25th of December. It was so much easier to separate the worldly festival (on the 5th of December) from the sacred festival (on the 25th). However, here in Canada, it is such a tragedy that Jesus and Santa have to share the same day, and it is implied that I'm too simple-minded to distinguish between the two — as if the kingdom of Heaven was ever threatened by the likes of Santa, anyway.

Last Christmas, I saw a banner on someone's porch (right next to the flashing Christmas lights) that read "JESUS, THE REASON FOR THE SEASON." My Grade 8 history teacher taught us that the "reason" for the season was a reaction by Chris-



tians, hundreds of years ago, to a pagan festival celebrating the winter solstice. Christians protested this paganism by proclaiming December 25th as Christ's birthday. A similar thing happened to Halloween, I'm just a little perturbed at how the actions of these pagans centuries ago can still complicate my life.

Can't just be obedient?

Today our worship services still reflect that "over-reaction" to the pagan festival. We have the 15 or 20 weeks of Advent to celebrate. We have the red, blue, orange, green, purple, yellow, bronze, and lavender Advent candles — each having their own profound meaning. There are wreaths and bows steeped in meaning and tradition. By the time all of their special meanings are explained to me, by way of bulletin announcements or even whole sermons, we're half way to New Year's Eve.

Whoever invented all these worship enhancements, anyway? Can't I just be obedient to Christ, my Savior? I agree with Bonhoeffer, who said, "So many people come to church with a genuine desire to hear what we have to say, yet they are always going back home with the uncomfortable feeling that we are making it too difficult for them to come to Jesus."

I really don't care where Christmas came from, or where it is going. Call me a Christian Reformed scrooge, but I'll take Easter over Christmas any day. Don't give me a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, give me a bleeding and broken Jesus! Not just at Easter — every day. Now, that, as the song says, is comfort and joy!

No connection

Please, don't misunderstand. I love the Christmas season. Always have. I just resent having to distinguish between the secular and the sacred.

If you think you have no problems with this, then ponder for a moment why you would like to see a gently falling snow on Christmas Eve. Examine your motives when you inwardly enjoy the Christmas displays on your city streets. Wonder about the joy of curling up with a loved one, and a glass of wine as you stare, glassy-eyed, at your tree and the presents beneath it — until one or two in the morning. The warmth of being with family and friends. The familiar yuletide carols. Admit it, these things have nothing to do with our Savior Jesus.

If that thought disturbs you, then you can explain to me that the lights on the trees point us to the Light of the World. I'll accept that. Or you can tell me that the snow reminds us of salvation. I'll go for that, too. And Christmas trees — didn't Martin Luther drag one in from the forest one day and hang some candles in it? Maybe, he did.

My point is this: don't get sidetracked. Jesus and Santa have nothing to do with each other. There is no connection. Be obedient to Christ all year round. If that obedience is jeopardized by Santa, reindeer, or Grinches, then, by all means, avoid them like the plague! Maybe while you're at it, examine whether or not television, videos, leisure activities and busy schedules might be inhibiting that obedience as well.

But, for many of us, obedience is in no way threatened by the likes of snowmen and Christmas trees. Jesus has allowed us to enjoy these things in the same way he lets us enjoy food, water, money and warm homes — all of which can easily come between Christ and obedience.

In Matthew 11, the "Reason for the Season" says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Enjoy the lightness of his burden, every day of the year, and maybe, if you can risk it, go out with the kids and roll yourself a snowman. If you really like life on the edge, call him Frosty.

Ken Vandersluis lives in Chatham, Ont.

Simply believe

Vivian M. Loken

Toward the horizon where the sun dropped steadily, green tops of cypress trees seemed to pierce the lavender-tinted clouds overhead.

Joseph ran trained fingers across the grain of polished wood. Cyrus, of Nain — a village to the south — ordered this bench for a festival.

It seemed likely that Cyrus and his family were becoming involved in worship of human-made gods and this bench would hold icons for pagan worship. When asked about the synagogue at Nain, Cyrus had begun talking about an illness among herds of sheep in his vicinity.

Joseph could have refused to make the bench but he needed the money. Now that he was betrothed to Mary, he had to plan for a family. As he straightened tired shoulders, his expression softened. *She's a gentle girl!* he thought.

Shopkeepers hurried past on errands to complete the day's business. The hard soles of their sandals tapped along the cobble street.

Joseph's thoughts returned to private matters. He remembered his uncle saying, hesitantly: "Your Mary is on her knees longer than others at time of worship. You don't think she might be — uh — well, fanatical?"

Joseph himself was awed by Mary's devotion to her faith. Instead of joining the girls who gossiped together, she set out every afternoon with a basket of fruit and bread for neighbors who were sick or in sorrow. She went often to the synagogue.

"She's serious," said Joseph, in reply, "but she will be a good wife."

His thoughts returned to the meeting of their families. All of the members had contributed to the dowry which included household linens, pottery and even some gems.

The planned marriage was looked on favorably since both Mary and Joseph descended in a direct line from the House of David.

Mary had looked at the stack of goods and then directly at Joseph. By accident, her cool fingers brushed his arm below

the folds of his tunic.

Any doubts Joseph had felt about his upcoming marriage vanished.

Bringing himself into the present, Joseph picked up the shavings from the floor and set the unfinished bench aside. It was time to go home.

He would have been startled to see Mary right then. Something was taking place that would kindle minds for centuries to come. And he — Joseph — was included.

Mary's family had gone to a

special event at the synagogue, but she had chosen not to go. Sometimes she needed to be alone.

She had been thinking about prayer and was startled to find she was not alone. In a shaft of light where the door stood ajar was — someone. Mary leaned against a small cane table. The presence was an angel.

"Greetings," he said. "you are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

The only sound was a faint tinkling of bells worn by sheep drifting in from nearby pastures. Mary's lips trembled and her dark eyes widened under high arching brows.

"Do not be afraid, Mary," the

angel continued, gently, "You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus."

Mary clutched the table; a burst of tears beaded her eyelashes. She asked: "How shall this be, seeing I've never slept with a man?"

On heels of her question came the reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.... The one to be born is Immanuel."

Now, rhythmic sounds of donkeys' hoofs muffled in dust strayed in from the street.

"Even your elderly cousin Elizabeth conceived a son — she is in her sixth month," the

angel said. "Nothing is impossible with God."

Mary's right hand flew to her breast. She heard her own voice as from a distance saying, "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said."

After the angel vanished, Mary looked about. How could the few pieces of furniture, the curtained doorways and the woven floormats look the same as ever?

But I'm betrothed! she thought. *By our custom a man will divorce someone who becomes pregnant by another.*

Mary wept. *What will people say? Won't our family be disgraced? How can a girl from a poor family be the mother of Immanuel?*

Elizabeth? she said, aloud, more calmly. *She is old and could never bear children.*

When confusion overtook her during the next hours, Mary reached for thoughts of her cousin. Elizabeth, forever taunted about being childless and therefore useless, was pregnant.

That was also Mary's mainstay through the test of telling her family the news. It saw her through the reactions of family members.

After the shock was over, her parents loyally defended Mary's chastity. They stood by her when friends came to visit. If Mary didn't feel like facing their questions, her family took visitors outside to the tiny neighborhood courtyard.

When the clamor died down, Mary felt terribly lonely — like a small, human island lost in an ocean of wonderment.



The Annunciation: an oil painting by Flemish artist Robert Campin from about 1425

She wasn't sure when she first thought of visiting Elizabeth. When she talked about the visit, her family protested.

But there was a new assurance about Mary. She was determined to see her cousin. Seeing this, her father arranged for her to accompany a friend shipping goods into the region of Judea.

The trip was hard despite the shipper's provision of a donkey for Mary to ride. The road traversed hilly passes and

ventured through valleys of wilderness. Dust flew endlessly, throwing a film over Mary's clothing and filtering into her mouth so that her teeth closed on grit.

Hanging on to her mount and trying to shut out the drivers' curses occupied her mind during the day. At night, she was too exhausted to think.

At last they reached the journey's end. Leaving the caravan, she trudged the remaining steps to Zechariah's house. *What will Elizabeth say?* she wondered.

Dear Elizabeth came to the door.

"Blessed are you," Elizabeth exclaimed, "and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"

The two women embraced each other with joy. They cried, and then talked excitedly. Words tumbled out, were re-examined and repeated.

"How did you know about me?" Mary asked, remembering the words of the angel who visited her.

"As soon as I heard your greeting," Elizabeth replied, "the baby I am carrying leaped for joy. Blessed is she who believes that what the Lord said to her will be accomplished."

This leaping in her womb was like no other movement common to childbearing, she explained, with a becoming air of assurance.

As the two women talked, joy flooded over Mary. Whatever doubt she had felt vanished. She had been chosen to bear a son who would be God's gift to the world. She was lifted up into a warmth and joyfulness never before experienced.

"My soul praises the Lord," she said, "and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has kept in mind the humble state of his servant."

Mary stayed with Elizabeth and Zechariah for six weeks. Then she returned home with the same trade caravan as before.

She would not see Elizabeth again before the birth of her cousin's son, to be named John, who was to draw others to the Christ. She returned to Nazareth and to her betrothed, Joseph.

I love Mary, Joseph had thought, when he heard the news about her. *But, by custom, I must divorce her because she became pregnant.*

Then, he had a dream. An angel, appearing one night, told him, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus [which means Christ — the Messiah], because he will save his people from their sin."

Next day, Joseph's tools flew among the pieces of wood. It was a wonder he got anything done because he couldn't keep his mind on his work.

He remembered a priest in the synagogue preaching about the prophet Isaiah. "The Lord himself will give you a sign [that Immanuel is about to come]. The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel [which means 'God with us']."

That recollection helped Joseph overcome doubt. He announced that he would keep his vows to Mary, and she came to live with him.

Then, word came from Roman officials that a census had been ordered and all were to be registered. Joseph, from the House of David, must enrol at Bethlehem.

The news threw his household into chaos.

"Why, it's 70 miles from here to Bethlehem!" he said. "Mary's close to giving birth. Let's see, if we can make 15 miles on Day One, Day Two, Day Three and Day Four, we might get there on Day Five. Of course, there are mountains to cross...."

With Mary on the back of a donkey, they set off. Sometimes, the road flanked valleys abundant with olive groves, and sometimes brushy growth on every side blocked their view. When they pushed over a hilltop and saw the city, Joseph sighed. Somewhere in that maze of buildings, he must find shelter.

They arrived at the city's outskirts where he asked for directions to the place of enrolment. Surely, there would be an inn nearby!

They were all tired: Mary, Joseph and the donkey. One

innkeeper after another turned them away. It got so Joseph heard the words before the keeper said, "No room here!"

The place they finally found was a cave-like alcove beside a stable. Joseph and Mary squeezed into the place. They were barely settled before the birth pangs began.

Mary and the child came through the birth safely! With enormous relief, Joseph laid the son he would call his own in a little niche above them where the baby just fit. Oxen strayed in to sniff at Jesus as if they wondered what he was doing in their midst.

Mary and the baby slept while Joseph kept watch. He was startled when shepherds coming in from the hills approached, all talking at once.

"We came to see the King," they said.

Joseph brought them to the shelf-like opening where Jesus lay. The shepherds stared and talked among themselves before speaking to Joseph. Although their dialect was hard to interpret, little by little Joseph pieced together their story.

As they had been tending sheep out on the hills near the city, an angel had appeared, announcing, "Today, in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ, the Lord."

Again and again, the shepherds turned to leave, only to be drawn back to where Jesus lay.

"If he's a king why doesn't he wear a robe?" one of them inquired. "And where's his crown?" another demanded.

They asked questions Christians have pondered through the ages: "How come we got to see him first, lowly shepherds that we are?"

Immediately after the census, Joseph returned to Galilee with his wife and child. The young parents went off one day to present their firstborn at the synagogue.

As they entered, a devout man named Simeon came forward and took the child in his arms. He blessed God. "Sovereign Lord," he said, "as you have promised, please now

dismiss your servant in peace. For I have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the sight of all people."

Because of this child, Simeon said, "the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed."

Tears rolled down the old man's cheeks. He made a confession of his own faith and he blessed Mary and Joseph.

Mary glowed. Her eyes met Joseph's. Their bewilderment disappeared. They simply believed.

to believers through his Son. Our part of the offering is to simply believe.

Except where indicated Scriptural passages are paraphrased from Chapters Luke and Matthew of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

Vivian Loken is a freelance writer from Minneapolis, Minn.

Christian Courier

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The residents of Shalom Manor, a Christian Long Term Care Facility in Grimsby, Ont., convey to their loved ones and friends, at this blessed Christmas Season and throughout the New Year 1996 the following message:

*May you have
The gladness of Christmas
which is HOPE,
The spirit of Christmas
which is PEACE
The heart of Christmas
which is LOVE.*

The following residents of Shalom Manor have requested that their names be included into the 1995 Christmas Greetings edition of Christian Courier.

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When magi camped in Bethlehem

Ralph F. Wilson

"Could I rent that little house in the back for my family?" Joseph inquired at our door. "We've just moved to Bethlehem from Nazareth."

"And how do you plan to *pay* for it?" my husband, Jacob retorted. He didn't trust outsiders, you know. *Mercy!* If we had just known who they were, we'd have *given* it to them. But no one knew. Not then.

Joseph held out his hands. Strong, big hands, callused from hard labor. "I'd work for you. Help with the livestock, harvest in the summer, whatever you need," he said. His eyes were pleading. "I... we just had a little baby last week...."

"Oh, was that your baby born in the stable behind the inn?" said Jacob.

"You know about it?" Joseph was amazed, but continued, "When I can get some carpenter jobs I can pay you in cash."

I could see Jacob weakening. He looked at me, and I smiled. "Yeah, you can take it," he said gruffly. "But I'll expect to see you first thing in the morning. We've got wood to cut in the hills."

They moved in that afternoon and Mary and I got to become fast friends. She reminded me of my own daughter.

Regular visitors

Two years later about midnight, a caravan lumbered into Bethlehem and halted right in front of our house. Camels were kneeling, riders climbing down from their mounts. Easterners, they were, and rich. There were three of them — the rich ones, I mean. You don't count servants, I'm told.

They were looking beyond us to the little house where Mary and Joseph and Jesus lived. It was bathed in a gentle, ethereal light. I looked up, then, and saw the star — I guess that was what it was — shedding its clear light on the house. The rich men — *magi* you call them — didn't seem afraid. They moved toward the little house with their retinue of servants behind them.

Through the open door we could see them kneeling on the dirt floor before the sleeping Jesus.

"We saw the child's star in the East. We knew that it meant

a great King had been born among the Jews, greater than any one earth," Balthazar was saying. "We came to do homage to such a great king."

I could see tears flowing down Mary's cheeks. The man continued. "We went to Jerusalem, but they knew of no baby kings."

Jesus, a king? How could it be? The family was so poor, Joseph just a farmer-carpenter; Mary a peasant girl.

"We had an audience with King Herod," he went on. "His scholars said the Messiah-king was to be born here, in Bethlehem of Judah. King Herod seemed troubled." He paused and murmured something to the others in their strange Eastern tongue. You could tell they didn't trust Herod.

Strange gift

The Magi motioned for their gifts to be brought in. The first fumbled with the latches on a strongbox and then pushed up the lid. Gold! Under the light from the flickering lamp, coins and ingots sparkled. "For the King," he said simply, and then prostrated himself before the toddler. Little Jesus, beginning to wake up now, just sat there, watching intently.

The second visitor opened his chest. Ah... the fragrance of exotic spices flooded the room. Jesus sniffed and peered into the box, and then the second visitor prostrated himself before the child.

Then Balthazar brought the final box containing a fragile alabaster flask. He pulled the stopper and a new smell struck us — heavy and rich, the smell of death — myrrh, used to anoint the bodies of the dead. Strange gift for a toddler, I thought, even a royal one. He replaced the stopper, and then he, too, knelt with his forehead to the ground before the child.

Finally, the three excused themselves, and sort of backed out of the tiny room. Joseph reached out to Mary, who took Jesus in her arms. They sat together quietly, holding each other, trying to understand.

Now Balthazar spoke to Jacob. "Could we encamp in your pasture tonight?" Jacob nodded.

The man signalled, and the servants began unpacking tents.

By now, half the town was standing on the road in front of our house watching, faces lit by sputtering torches. Servants trekked back and forth, carrying all sorts of things from the donkeys and camels to the three great pavilions they had set up. Finally, people drifted off to their homes; but I must confess, I didn't sleep much.

Next morning the servants were up early reloading the animals, and finally striking the grand tents. The Magi had been over to Joseph and Mary's house several times to see the child, and then they were gone, camel bells tinkling in the distance.

The next night, however, we were awakened by someone beating on our door. It was Joseph. Outside I could see Mary with little Jesus. Joseph was pale and trembling.

"Come in, man," said Jacob, "You look like you've seen a ghost."

"An angel," Joseph replied. "An angel appeared to me in a dream. He told me, 'Get up,

take the child and his mother, and escape, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.'" Mary was shaking so I went over and held her. "Jacob," Joseph asked, "may I buy one of your donkeys for the journey?"

"Of course."

Joseph removed a single gold coin from the folds of his robe. "That ought to cover it," he said, placing it firmly in Jacob's palm.

How can we thank you?

My husband's eyes lit up, his fingers closed over it, and he was just about to tuck it away when he stopped and then handed the coin back to Joseph. "No," he said, "I want to *give* you the donkey, and wish you Godspeed." (I was so proud of Jacob in that moment.) "It's the least we can do," he said, "for you... and for the Christ-child."

I hustled about, heart in my throat, putting together some food for the family, while Jacob and Joseph tied the heavy treasure boxes on Joseph's donkey. Then Joseph helped Mary and the child up onto the other donkey — our donkey — and embraced Jacob.

"I don't know how we can thank you for what you have

done for us these past couple of years," he was saying. "You've made us feel at home, and now... and now we must leave you in the night. Thanks." Then he whispered, "You won't tell anyone where we went, will you?"

"Where are you going? Back to Nazareth?"

"It's best you didn't know," Joseph said, "but we'll see you again. I'm sure we'll see you again." And with that, he led the animals to the road, south towards Egypt. I waved, and little Jesus waved back at me.

"Jacob, do you think they'll be all right by themselves with all that treasure?" I asked.

He looked at me with a tenderness and wonder I saw in him only now and again. "The God who summoned the Magi and sent the angel is right there with them. They're not alone, Rebecca. How could they be alone?"

Dr. Ralph F. Wilson is founding pastor of Church of the Live Oaks, Rocklin, Calif. He has earned M.Div. and D.Min. degrees from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif. His articles and stories have appeared in many Christian periodicals, including Decision, Moody Monthly, Charisma, Sunday Digest, Home Life and Leadership.



RAFAELLO BUSONI



Operation STABLE

Sonya VanderVeen Feddeema

"I won't let Joe and Eva steal you, Suzy!" Paynella whispered in the pudgy one-year-old's ear. "I've got a plan... Operation STABLE. Now we just have to get rid of Mama and sneak out of here."

"Pass me that tinsel, Payne," Mama said. She eyed the towering Christmas tree. "Another crooked one! In all your twelve years, Payne, this has got to be the worst one we've had!"

"What do you expect?" Paynella said. "We always wait till the day before Christmas to buy one!" She set Suzy beside a cardboard case of kidney beans. Then she grabbed the tinsel from the oak buffet and handed it to Mama.

"Sorry," Mama said. "I've been busy cutting hair. But we're almost ready for Christmas. Let's see... what else needs to be done? Oh, yes... get the shoe box out of your bottom drawer. Your creche from Grandma is in it."

Paynella picked up Suzy and clattered up the stairs to their tiny bedroom. She put Suzy down by the dresser, then yanked open the bottom drawer. She took out the shoe box and set it beside Suzy. Suzy thumped it with her plump fists.

Paynella looked wistfully at her. "Remember?" she asked. "The first nights we had you, you slept in this drawer on a pillow. Just till we borrowed the crib." She sighed. "Do you remember them... your parents, I mean?"

Suzy smiled, then toddled to her crib and peeked through the bars at her teddy bear.

"I guess you don't."

Paynella remembered how Suzy's parents had died in a car accident about a year ago when Suzy was three weeks old. Her guardians, Joe and Eva, were missionaries in Korea. They weren't able to care for Suzy because Eva was seriously ill. So Mama and Dad agreed to help out their good friends by taking care of Suzy until Eva was well again.

From the first night, Suzy slept in Paynella's room. Initially, Suzy's cries for her bottle agitated Paynella. She resented losing the solitude of her room and the refuge it provided from Rodney and Derrick, her rambunctious younger brothers whose energy their crowded and cluttered house could barely

contain.

But soon Paynella listened for the comforting cadence of Suzy's sleepy sighs. She whispered secrets to her — secrets she wouldn't have told anyone else, not even her friend Katrina.

Each day after school, while Mama cut hair in her basement shop, Paynella cared for Suzy. She changed her diapers; read board books to her; amused her

long time she lay awake till she devised a plan — Operation STABLE.

The next day Paynella phoned Katrina, who lived five houses down the road from her on a small farm. She told her about Joe's phone call, and her plan to hide with Suzy in the room at the back of Katrina's barn. They would stay there till Joe and Eva gave up looking for Suzy and returned to Korea.

it shut. "It's not fair!" she moaned. "You don't love a kid for a year and then say, 'Who's next in line to love this kid?'"

In the living room, Paynella ripped open the shoe box. Suzy tugged at the tissue paper. She seized two shepherds and chomped on one.

"Careful!" Paynella said, snatching the shepherds. "You'll choke!"

Suzy squawked.

"Here, play with this."

Paynella handed Suzy a wooden block. Then she unwrapped the stable and three wise men, Joseph and Mary, and baby Jesus in the manger.

Paynella glanced at the clock. Five fifteen. Joe and Eva's plane will be landing soon, she thought. How will I get rid of Mama and get out of here?"

"I have to call someone," Paynella said, her voice high-pitched.

"Not now!" Mama said. "Finish setting up the creche. And then put some pine boughs on the cases of kidney beans."

Paynella groaned. Those kidney beans cases really bug me! she thought. One case stood on each side of the couch; six cases were strewn beneath it. Mama had become involved in a bulk-buying grocery scheme. When she was ordering, her vision blurred from continually looking at rows of squares on the forms. Instead of marking off the square for cases of pineapple — everyone's favorite — she checked off kidney beans. Eight cases. Twenty four cans in a case. Enough kidney beans to make you gag!

But Mama hadn't thought so. She said, "We'll use the cases for foot rests and side tables till we need the cans."

Crazy! Paynella thought. Mama is so weird!

Paynella watched Mama set up a rickety ladder, the one Dad insisted they discard. Even though Mama was shorter than both Dad and Paynella, she persisted in putting the star on the tree each year because it had been her job when she was a child.

The doorbell rang.

"Get that," Mama said as she climbed the ladder with the star in her hand. "Probably one last customer. Take Suzy with you or she'll eat the wise men."

Paynella swung Suzy on her hip. The doorbell rang again. Oh, no! she thought. Are Joe and Eva here already? She walked into the hall and opened the front door. A wiry man and a broad woman dressed in blue uniforms stood on the porch. An ambulance was parked in the snowy driveway.

"Does Linda Jones live here?" the woman asked, hoisting a medical bag in her hand.

"Yes," Paynella said. "That's my Mama."

Crash!

Paynella swung around. "What was that?" She raced into the living room. The man and woman darted after her.

Mama lay beneath the decrepit ladder.

"Mama!" Paynella cried. "Are you OK?"

"Lie still," the woman commanded.

"Are you all right?" the man asked kindly, as he lifted the ladder and set it against the wall.

"I think so," Mama said, struggling to sit up.

"Lie down!" the bulky woman said curtly, pressing Mama's shoulder to the floor. "Get the stretcher, Fred!" The man hurried outside to the ambulance.

"Now, why would he do that?" Mama asked, annoyed.

"Something might be broken."

Mama snorted. "Broken? The only broken things are the Christmas lights and my husband just went to buy new ones!"

"We received a call to assist Linda Jones. Unknown injury. We need to take you in to be checked. It's procedure."

"I never called! I'm not hurt! And I'm not going anywhere!"

"Listen! From now on I'm making the decisions!"

The man wheeled the stretcher into the living room. The ambulance attendants



with rattles and balls; fed her a bottle and cereal; and cuddled and kissed her.

And loved her. More and more.

Paynella repeatedly begged Mama to adopt Suzy. But each time Mama explained that they couldn't because Joe and Eva were Suzy's legal guardians. Paynella ranted against Mama's maddening logic. But Mama refused to relent.

Two weeks ago, while Paynella was babysitting the boys and Suzy, Joe phoned from Korea. He and Eva planned to pick up Suzy on Christmas Eve. They would fly into Toronto at 5:30 p.m., then rent a car and be at Paynella's house around 7:00 p.m. Paynella promised to pass the message on to her parents.

But that night, as she listened to Suzy's soothing sighs, she resolved not to tell them. For a

Katrina protested that kidnapping was a crime. But Paynella pleaded with her, explaining that Operation STABLE wasn't a kidnapping mission. It stood for Suzy Transferred Away Beyond Linda's Eyes, Linda being Paynella's mother's name. She was transferring Suzy from point A to point B for as long as would be necessary.

Katrina finally agreed to help by gathering all the necessary supplies. They decided that before Paynella escaped to the barn with Suzy she would phone Katrina and warn her with their code word: Operation STABLE.

Suddenly, Mama jarred Paynella's reverie. "Did you find the creche?" she yelled up the stairs.

"Coming!" Paynella glared at the empty drawer. She whipped

hoisted Mama, writhing and thrashing, onto the stretcher and strapped her in securely.

Paynella screamed, "What are you doing? Stop that!"

Suzy wailed.

"Just doing our job," the woman insisted.

"Payne! Payne! Mama cried.

"Where is the pain?" the woman said. "I thought you weren't hurt."

"Not that kind of pain, you... you... dimwit."

"Is there any other kind?"

Mama spluttered, "You should be putting up your Christmas tree instead of carrying off healthy people!"

"Mama!" Paynella cried. "Stop them!"

Carrying Suzy, Paynella stormed after the attendants as they wheeled Mama out of the house and lifted the stretcher into the ambulance. The door banged shut.

"Nuts!" the woman sneered. "First she doesn't have pain... then she does!"

"Mama isn't nuts! Bring her back!" Paynella shrieked at the disappearing ambulance. "Oh, nooo!" she wailed. "Mama's gone... just like I wanted. What am I going to do now?"

Suzy shivered and gently tapped Paynella's wet face. "Don't worry," Paynella said bravely. Inside the house, the phone rang. Paynella ran in and snatched up the receiver.

"Hi, Oh, Dad! I'm so glad...."

"I couldn't get any lights in town. So I'm going to Macton. Tell Mom that I'll be home as soon as I can."

"But, Dad! Mama just got carried away!"

"So, what else is new?" Dad said irritably.

Paynella cried, "But that's not what I meant. A woman and..."

"Look, the boys are sick of shopping. I've got to run or I'll never find lights."

Click.

Paynella banged down the receiver. "We'll take the sled," she said. "And your quilt." She scrambled upstairs with Suzy and grabbed the quilt out of her crib. Downstairs again, she quickly dressed Suzy and herself in their winter coats, boots and mittens. She ventured outside into the brisk night, fero-

ciously slamming the door behind her.

The Christmas tree tottered crazily, then toppled onto the coffee table, scattering the creche in every direction.

In the garage, Paynella put Suzy in the sled and wrapped her in the quilt. She pulled the sled down Parkvale Road, past Katrina's house and barn, till she reached the corner. She fidgeted till the light turned green, then darted down Main Street. When she reached the hospital, she placed the sled by the wall outside the Emergency Department. Then she picked up Suzy and cuddled her. "Don't be scared," she said. "Everything will be all right." Inside, she shuffled up to the admissions desk.

"Can I help you?" a nurse asked.

"Well... they... I mean the ambulance carried away Mama... and I... I don't know what they're going to do to her... and she wasn't even hurt."

"What's your mother's name?"

"Linda Jones."

"Have a seat in the waiting room and I'll check into it."

Paynella plopped wearily into a chair. She tugged off Suzy's snowsuit, boots and mittens, and snuggled her.

Suddenly a woman yelled, "Sit down and shut up!"

Paynella swivelled in her chair. She stared as a woman yanked a toddler's bony arm and flung her into a chair.

The toddler covered her face. "Ma...ma..." she whimpered.

"I said, 'Shut up,' and I mean it! I should've given you up!" the mother barked.

Paynella stared, horrified, till the woman noticed and glared at her. Paynella turned away.

The mother's heartless, abandoning words howled in Paynella's mind: "Should've given you up!" Should've given you up!"

Suzy sniffled as the toddler cried incessantly.

"It's OK," Paynella said, squeezing the tears from her own eyes. "Don't worry. Mama will be back soon and she'll take care of us... just like always."

Oh, Mama! Paynella thought. I love you! Even though you're weird, I love you!

A nurse hustled into the waiting room and said, "Ms. Allegro. Tonya." The mother and toddler

trailed behind her.

In the refreshing silence, Paynella rocked Suzy till she fell asleep. She kissed her tranquil face and whispered, "How long would we have lasted in the barn? One night? Maybe two? What if we had to hide for days? Could I have taken care of you like Mama does? Oh... I don't want to let you go!" Paynella choked back a sob.

Dad stepped out of the car. Suddenly, he cried out, "Joe! Eva!"

Mama and the boys leapt from the car. Everyone embraced.

But Paynella lurked in the back seat with Suzy.

Joe asked, "Didn't Paynella tell you? I called and said we'd be here on Christmas Eve."

"No," Mama said. "That's

"What we need is a nail and some rope to tie it up," Mama said. She scurried to the basement.

Paynella set Suzy down on the floor and fell to her knees beside her. She searched the floor and found the shepherds and the stable beneath the buffet. Suzy pattered around the room and discovered a wise man by the couch. Eva and Joe lovingly watched her.

Mama returned with a bulky nail, a hammer and a piece of twine.

"Sit down, Joe and Eva," she said. She dragged a case of kidney beans from under the couch. "Put your feet up. You've had a long trip."

Eva smiled. "Thanks!"

"That nail's a bit big, isn't it?" Dad said.

"Not really. This tree is stubborn." Mama positioned the nail, and swung the hammer. Bang! The nail ripped into the wall. A crack, like a sinister snake, slithered down the wall.

Suddenly Paynella cried, "Suzy, you found the baby Jesus!"

Suzy beamed at the figure in her hand. She jammed it into her mouth.

Joe and Eva laughed.

"Give it to me!" Paynella said. She assembled her creche on the coffee table with the baby Jesus in the centre.

"That tree isn't going anywhere now," Mama said, as she tied one end of the twine around the top of the tree and the other around the nail.

"Let's clean up a bit," Dad said. He began stringing the new lights on the tree. "Payne, you tidy up the floor. Derrick and Rodney, you guys make hot chocolate for us."

Paynella gathered up the empty shoe box and tissue paper, then hoisted Suzy into her arms. She mounted the stairs. In their bedroom, she opened the bottom drawer of the dresser and deposited the box in it. Suddenly she smiled. "Suzy," she said, "next Christmas my creche will be in your new home! I'll send it to you wherever you are!"

Paynella gently closed the drawer and carried Suzy downstairs to her new family.



"But I will... I will!"

Later a nurse scurried into the waiting room. "We've finally located your mother," she said to Paynella. "Sorry it took so long. There was a mix up."

"What happened?"

Another woman named Linda Jones on 15 Parkdale Street. And your address is 15 Parkvale Road, right?"

Paynella nodded.

"Anyway, she phoned for help. The ambulance went to your house, thinking you called. They had to bring your mother in. That's policy. Later, the other Linda Jones phoned again and things were cleared up. I'm sorry. What a waste of your time on Christmas Eve!"

"No," Paynella said, as she thought about her decision. "Not really."

Home at last! Mama said as Dad steered the car into the driveway. The headlights shifted across two shadowy figures on the porch.

"Who's that?" Dad asked.

Oh, no! Paynella groaned inwardly. They're here!

strange!" Then she yelled, "Paynella, come here!"

Paynella clung to Suzy as she lifted her out of the car seat. She stumbled to the porch.

Eva touched Suzy's cheek. "Oh... you're so beautiful! We've finally come to take you home."

Joe reached out his arms to take Suzy, but she slunk against Paynella's shoulder.

"It'll take time," Mama said. "They're crazy about each other. Just let Payne hold her for awhile." She put her arm around Paynella's shoulder and hugged her. "Let's go inside before we freeze." She opened the door and switched on the light. Everyone followed her into the hall and took off their coats and boots.

"Come this way," Mama said. She walked into the dark living room, then groaned. "Ouch! What did I step on?" She switched on a light, bent down and picked up a wise man. When she looked up, she saw the toppled Christmas tree.

"Oh, no!" she groaned.

"Let me help," Joe said. Together they hoisted the tree upright. It promptly collapsed again.

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Christmas is the beginning of peace



Mary presents Jesus to Simeon, in the Jerusalem temple (Painting by an unknown Italian artist).

Frank Sawyer

In the Gospel of Luke 2:25ff we find several verses that speak about Simeon. The poet T.S. Eliot has composed a song for Simeon in which he records some thoughts of this old Jew. Some of the details of the poem allow us to identify with Simeon, while the general impression is that of the image of an old man, tired of life, talking of real problems, yet seeing a sign of hope even though he will not live to see more.

Already at the beginning of the poem Eliot speaks — or rather Simeon does — of the sun setting and death coming. The essence of life has dried up: "My life is light, waiting for the death wind." But

then Simeon suddenly repeats words of promise: "Grant us thy peace."

Speaking in the first person plural, Simeon seems to include not only himself, but all of Jerusalem, and maybe even the modern reader as well. "Grant us thy peace." For a moment we are reminded of the necessity of seeking shalom in a way that goes beyond our own possibilities.

'Righteous and devout'

After this, we hear Simeon recording something of his life, "righteous and devout," as Luke tells us. "I have... kept faith... provided for the poor," Simeon says. Of course, it is a question whether we should accept this so simply. Could it not be that we find here a kind of self-justification that implies spiritual pride? Whatever the case, Simeon, too, sees that the hope he has is not going to change everything into utopia. "Who shall remember my house?" He speaks prophetically of the foreign swords, a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, 70 years after Christ — and spoken of so clearly by Jesus, too.

So the prayer for peace is not only that of an old man who is ready to die, but also in name of a people who were soon to suffer "cords, scourges and lamentation."

'According to thy word'

In the middle of this description of affliction and decease for "one who has eighty years and no to-morrow," we hear the words: "According to thy word."



T.S. Eliot

The contrasts that follow are typical for Eliot, but also biblical: "They shall praise Thee and suffer... with glory and derision." This is how we falteringly mount "the saints' stair." Where there is life there is death, and where there is faith their is doubt; where glory, derision and where praise, suffering. But Simeon is not all that attracted by the "saints' stair." "Not for me the martyrdom... not for me the ultimate vision."

The promise is sufficient

In Luke 2, Simeon says to Mary, the mother of Jesus: "A sword shall pierce your heart," a reference to the death of her son on the cross. Eliot applies this to Simeon, and to the contemporary reader as well. But in the middle of all this, it is

sufficient to see the promise of salvation, even though the complete reality is not yet.

Through this Eliot poem we are confronted with the mystery of Christmas: the birth of Christ didn't change everything all at once. There are still problems, sufferings, death. But what the poet says is that we already have enough. We already have peace in Christ, according to his Word, and we have seen his salvation... incomplete, not as a definite vision, but it is enough to live and die... in peace.

Christmas is not the end, but rather the beginning of a great change.

Dr. Frank Sawyer teaches at the Reformed Theological School in Sarospatak, Hungary.

A Song For Simeon

*Lord, the Roman hyacinths are blooming in bowls and
The winter sun creeps by the snow hills;
The stubborn season has made a stand.
My life is light, waiting for the death wind,
Like a feather on the back of my hand.
Dust in sunlight and memory in corners
Wait for the wind that chills towards the dead land.*

*Grant us thy peace.
I have walked many years in this city,
Kept faith and fast, provided for the poor,
Have given and taken honor and ease.
There went never any rejected from my door.
Who shall remember my house, where shall live my children's children
When the time of sorrow is come?
They will take the goat's path, and the fox's home,
Fleeing from the foreign faces and the foreign swords.*

*Before the time of cords and scourges and lamentation
Grant us thy peace.
Before the stations of the mountain of desolation,
Before the certain hour of maternal sorrow,
Now at this birth season of decease,
Let the Infant, the still unspeaking and unspoken Word,
Grant Israel's consolation
To one who has eighty years and no to-morrow.*

*According to thy word.
They shall praise Thee and suffer in every generation
With glory and derision,
Light upon light, mounting the saints' stair.
Not for me the martyrdom, the ecstasy of thought and prayer,
Not for me the ultimate vision.
Grant me thy peace.
(And a sword shall pierce thy heart,
Thine also.)
I am tired with my own life and the lives of those after me,
I am dying in my own death and the deaths of those after me.
Let thy servant depart,
Having seen thy salvation.*

'What fun it is to ride and sing'



BERTA HOSMAR

"All aboard!" shouted the driver. Within minutes the bus had filled up and we were off to see the Christmas lights. The beautiful homes on Old Scugog Road near Bowmanville, Ont., are known for their extravagant Christmas decorations and each year more and more visitors come to see the spectacular sights.

The passengers on our bus were regular visitors at our Christian drop-in centre called Gate 3:16, or "The Gate," an Oshawa street ministry to hurting, sometimes homeless people.

Tonight those people had a chance to enjoy a pleasant evening. A local church had provided a bus, the driver volunteered his time and refreshments at a restaurant were paid for by another individual.

The faithful come

The atmosphere was festive. Ann had brought her guitar and immediately everybody belted out such secular gems as: "Santa Claus is coming to town," or "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer."

"Jingle Bells" proved to be the most popular. When we came to the words "What fun it is to ride and sing, in a one-horse open sleigh-hey," George, co-ordinator at The Gate, changed that line to: "in a gas-propelled Pentecostal bus," much to the delight of the passengers.

After a while Ann added carols to her repertoire and soon we were singing: "O Come, All Ye Faithful" and "Silent Night."

I noticed that Andrew, an elderly man who often skips the Bible study, was also mouthing the words. From Christmas carols Ann switched to rousing gospel choruses. The rickety bus fairly rocked with jubilant clapping and singing as we drove along the otherwise quiet country roads.

Good will abounds

Bill, who has a problem with alcohol, seemed fairly sober and was entertaining Peter's two young children by wiggling his ears and looking cross-eyed. Peter's kids were staying with their dad for the week, but there was a slight problem: Peter was temporarily without a place to live. With the typical helpfulness of people who have very little but still want to share, Bill had offered them his single-bed sitting room. He would find shelter somewhere else for the week.

Keith was also present. Tonight he was dressed as a man, but occasionally he appears at The Gate as Katie, complete with lipstick, high heels and dress. Only his hairy arms and deep voice give him away. As staff and volunteers we had to get used to the fact that *she* is a *he*. Even some of the regular clients at The Gate, who themselves might struggle with addictions or have a prison record, feel far superior, and laugh behind his back.

But that night the motto on the bus was: "Goodwill towards men" (no pun intended) and Keith was part of our big family. He sang along happily.

Joanne was also present with her current boyfriend. At 16 she was expecting her second child.

Her little boy lives in a foster home. With her equally young, acne-faced boyfriend's arm around her shoulder, and her very pregnant figure, the couple could almost pose as Mary and Joseph. You couldn't help feeling protective towards those two kids.

At our destination people got off the bus to enjoy the fairy tale-like atmosphere. It was heart-warming to see the beaming faces. "Fabulous!" "Unbelievable!" "Can we go again next year?" were some of the delighted comments.

Andrew had stayed on the bus because his feet were still sore. We had discovered at The Gate how poorly he was walking lately, and he had finally admitted that the corns on his feet were painful. Somebody knew where you could get them removed for next to nothing, and after The Gate had provided him with clean socks, a towel and five dollars, a volunteer drove him to his appointment. He then bragged about the fact that the corns on his feet were the biggest the nurse had ever seen!

Saying — and living — grace

After more sightseeing and singing, everybody was ready for refreshments. George had notified the owner of the restaurant and we were assigned to a room.

We were a motley crowd. Some people in our group looked rather unkempt with long, straggly hair and faces that needed a shave badly. Others could have used a shower. They were people we might shy away from if we met

them on a lonely street. Yet because we had met them at The Gate and had gotten to know them, we had become friends. We had learned that "there, but for the grace of God, go I."

George told us that everybody was allowed to order coffee or hot chocolate, and we were also allowed an order of french fries and a croquette. When the food arrived, some of

some 40 people, most of them with their own stories of defeat and frustration, bowed their heads and thanked God for food and fellowship.

Lenny, a middle-aged woman with the mind of a child, added her own fervent prayer of thanksgiving. "And God, thank you for my friends at The Gate, and that they love me. And thank you for Baby Jesus. And



us, including my husband and I, started to eat right away. In our Christian Reformed minds we had labelled the food "just a snack."

But it proved that the Bible studies at The Gate had been fruitful. "Hey George, don't we have to say grace? Some people are eating already!" shouted somebody. And so it happened that on this December evening, in a Port Perry, Ont., restaurant,

keep that nasty devil away from me. Praise God, Amen and Amen!"

Later we decided that this evening with its simple joys and warm fellowship had been one of the most meaningful Christmas celebrations of the season.

Berta Hosmar is a freelance writer and volunteer who lives in Whitby, Ont.



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Black sheep, have you any cans?

Jan de Bree

As Fiona followed the tracks with her father to the bridge and the river, her white vinyl running shoes bounced on the gravel railway bed. Under her feet the grinding stones and pebbles crunched in the early Saturday morning air. A junco chirped and a chickadee rustled the leaves as it jumped into a thimbleberry bush when Fiona and her father passed there.

On week days people would obscure this quiet with their truck engines, with the whine and screech of their saws, and the thump-thud of bouncing railway timbers as their cars passed over the crossing. Today, even the gulls, which normally squawked, pecked and chased each other as they feuded over salmon fry or a potato chip, stood at the river's edge dreaming, unaware of their rippled reflections in the swirling water. Or they waddled absent-mindedly along the gravel beds like elderly ladies and gentlemen in a park on a winter's evening, wondering what to do if spring should arrive early.

"We're early enough, Dad," said Fiona. "Wasn't it six-thirty when we left? I woke up by myself. I hope he hasn't come yet. If he comes at six-thirty we'll come at six o'clock tomorrow, and if he comes at six we'll come at five-thirty, and if he comes at five-thirty we'll come at five, and if he comes at five we'll come at four-thirty. He would never come at four. That's too early for him. Nobody comes at four. It's dark then. You can't see anything."

Fiona swung her arms back and forth to add force to her words as she spoke. "You were here at seven o'clock yesterday, Dad, and he wasn't here yet. I don't think he's here now."

The distance from the road along the railway to the river was only a hundred yards, straight, between cottonwood trees. Grass grew along the rusted rails and thorny vines crawled over the rotten creosote-coated ties. The river, on Fiona's left, flowed north and turned east at the black steel bridge where the tracks crossed it. There, the river, like a border, divided people into swimmers and drinkers.

Under the bridge on the north

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOANNA DE BREE



shore, the town side, were huge boulders. The drinkers gathered there all year around. They left bottles, cans, plastic bags, brown paper bags, cardboard boxes and cigarette packages on the ground and in the grass.

On the south shore, where there was a gravel beach, the swimmers, mostly mothers and children, gathered during the summer months and left behind disposable diapers, towels, shorts, paper cups, candy wrappers and potato chip bags; garbage hung up in bushes, against clumps of grass, stuck between rocks and logs or floated in pools till the current caught it. Crows and sea gulls, with fixed eyes turned sideways, pecked under and into the paper bags, or with their beaks tossed them into the air. Occasionally a man carrying two plastic shopping bags in each hand probed and prodded every scrap of paper, bag and cardboard carton for returnable bottles and cans. He was the fellow Fiona worried about. She had come to collect bottles and cans too.

She walked sideways, twisted to her right at the waist because she wanted to look up at her father while she talked to him about money and why people threw away valuables. She

tripped over a rock, but she turned the trip into a skip and kept on talking. She was six years old, in Grade 1.

"Rodney has never gone with you looking for bottles, has he, Dad? Just me. Isn't that right? Rodney doesn't like it. I like going with you, Dad. I like helping you when you work on the house. I hold the boards, don't I? When I grow up I want to be a marine biologist. Mum says when I'm sixteen I can take scuba diving lessons at the community centre. When I'm twelve I'm allowed to have a kitten and Rodney can have a lizard. He wants a blue-tongued skink. I like those lizards, too, but I want an iguana because they're vegetarian. Iguanas don't eat crickets. They're gross. Mum thinks they're gross, too. Dad, did you ever have a pet when you were a boy?"

Her father said he had had two dogs, a mutt named Rover and a pure bred German shepherd called Rex; and several cats. His favorite cat was a tabby.

"Oma likes cats. She had fourteen cats once, but only one was allowed in the house because there were so many," said Fiona. "And Grandma has a

cat."

Her father stopped walking and pointed to the grass. "There, Fiona, a can."

Fiona looked. She started for the can that lay on the sloped side of the railway bed under a broom bush. Three steps down the bank she stopped; her foot slipped on a rock that rolled as she pulled back. "It's a yucky beer can. There are probably stinky, dead slugs in it. You get it, Dad."

Her father encouraged her to keep on with the job. She tried again; she eased down the bank on her haunches. A few steps and she leaned forward. Fiona groped at the can. It was out of reach. Again she pulled back onto the railway bed. "Now I have spider webs all over my face. I hate this. You get it."

When she looked up at her father he gave a disapproving frown. "Please," said Fiona.

He reached down the bank to pick up the can. When he had it in his hand, he held it upside down and shook it. When nothing came out of it he stuffed the can into his plastic shopping bag.

"Five cents," said Fiona. "How many cans do we have now?"

"Three," said her father.

"That's fifteen cents," said Fiona.

Fiona and her dad walked toward the bridge, its rusting black steel frame reached across the water through the shadows of fir and cottonweed trees. They would go around and under it, down the gravel bank, sliding on loose stones, and past the granite foundations where the men sat who drank and then tossed their empty beer bottles and cans into the bushes. When the father and daughter arrived at the bridge, Fiona pointed. Across the water on the gravel beach in the corner where the river turned east wandered a man, a shopping bag in his hand.

"Dad, the man is here. He came before us. Now we won't find anything because he took it all," said Fiona.

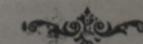
"You stay up here by the bridge. I'll go down and have a look. Maybe he hasn't been on this side yet."

Fiona watched the man from one of the granite blocks at the corner of the bridge while her father searched the bushes below.

"I found one bottle," he called up to her.

"Get it, Dad. Quick! The man is coming."

Fiona watched the man as he followed the gravel shoreline. She hoped there would be lots of bottles and cans to keep him on the other side. This did not happen. The man did not stop to pick up a can or a bottle. He kept walking toward the bridge and toward Fiona. This was what she believed because she could not see him any longer. He had disappeared into the trees and bushes that grew between the gravel beach and the bridge.



The next time she saw him he stood at the other end of the bridge; although she had expected him, she was still shocked. He wore a red baseball cap, a long brown coat and dark green pants. She noted two bags, not one, of bottles and cans. He had set them down on the bridge timbers while he looked out over the water and whistled a tune. Afraid of being seen, Fiona slipped behind the black I-beam that rose up where

the man stood. She listened for his foot steps.

Where was her father? She wanted him to come. She listened for him. She waited but heard nothing, neither her father nor the man.

She had better look. Slowly she slid her face past the cold, damp steel to peer down the bridge at the man. He had moved and now stood in the middle of the bridge, staring down at the water below.

"Looking for fish," thought Fiona.

Then the man raised his arms above his head and began to sing:

And did those feet in ancient time walk upon England's mountains green? And was the holy Lamb of God on England's pleasant pastures seen?

Fiona shrank back behind the steel beam. She felt uncomfortable watching him while he sang. The man believed he was alone when he was not.

While she leaned against the beam she wished for her father. While she wished for her father she heard the singing man come closer.

Bring me my bow of burning gold; bring me my arrows of desire; bring me my spear: O clouds unfold! bring me my chariot of fire.

Fiona wanted to go down the steep bank below her and look for her father under the bridge, but she was afraid of the loose gravel on which she could slip and then slide. She stayed at the edge of the bridge, behind the steel beam, hoping the man would pass by without seeing her. She listened to his song. He was close.

Till we have built Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land, he sang as he came into view. Then he turned toward Fiona and said, "Hi, little girl. I saw you while I was still on the other side of the river."

Fiona took a step backward. Then she looked behind her. She stood on the edge of the bridge. Fifteen feet below her were thorny blackberries, prickly thistles and spear-like saplings. She called for her dad but there was no reply.

"Don't be afraid. I wouldn't hurt you."

"You're a stranger," said Fiona. "I'm not supposed to talk to strangers. You might want to take my cans."

"I wouldn't take your cans. I

have plenty myself."

"I have only three. But my dad is under the bridge looking for more."

"I'm collecting them so I can buy a Christmas present for my Mary."

"Are you poor?" asked Fiona.

"That's a good question," said the man. "I don't know."

"What do you mean, you don't know?"

"I don't have a television or a car," said the man, and he paused for a minute. During the silence Fiona studied his bushy eyebrows and the white and grey hair growing out of his ears. Then he asked "Why are you collecting those cans?"

"For Christmas present money."

"Have you saved a lot?" asked the man.

"No! You got all the cans and bottles because you came before six-thirty. That's not fair," said Fiona, a little angry. "Now we have to come at six o'clock." She looked at her shoes, "Don't you come at five-thirty. I will never be able to wake up before six o'clock, and I'll never find any cans if you do."

"Yes, that is frustrating for you. I can see that, and I do wake up early every morning."

said the man as he shook his two shopping bags up and down. "You know, one of these bags filled to the top holds about twenty cans. That is one dollar. Could you use one or two dollars?" he asked Fiona.

"I don't want your bags. You're saving for a present, too, and you don't even have a television or a car yet."

"I have another idea. Suppose I stay home tomorrow morning. That's Sunday, and you come here at six-thirty in the morning before anyone else, with your father, and collect the cans from the night before."

Fiona thought for a second, "Yes, that's a good idea."

"And if I may give you a suggestion, go across the bridge to my favorite spot among those trees over there." He pointed. "There you'll find plenty of cans and some bottles, but you must be brave and cross this bridge. Don't look down through the spaces between the timbers. Otherwise you'll scare yourself when you see the deep water swirling below you."

They looked at each other for a second, then smiled simultaneously. The man shuffled down the bank. When he had disappeared, Fiona's father came up the other side. He car-

ried a limp shopping bag.

"I found only two bottles and a can," he said.

"I talked to that man who got all the cans," said Fiona. She explained the man's idea to her father. Her father said it was considerate of the man, and agreed to take her the following morning.



Sunday morning along the railway track was quiet, more so than Saturday morning. Fiona held her father's hand as they stepped from timber to timber across the gaps through which Fiona caught glimpses of the river. The hundred feet of bridge was a long distance if one thought too much about the river below, or a train on the tracks. There was no room on the bridge when a train was coming, no catwalk to stand on while it passed, only the steel girders to hang in with nothing below but the river. Fiona recalled the man's words not to look down at the water.

When they reached the other end of the bridge Fiona's father helped her down the bank. They circled under the bridge where

they picked up six cans and two bottles.

"We have to go into those bushes. The man said so," said Fiona.

From under the bridge the path led into the trees. In the woods were two areas of bare soil, like campsites, hidden in the underbrush, where rocks and fallen trees served as chairs or benches and broken glass lay scattered over the ground. In those clearings lay dozens of cans, and in one corner stood a bag. Fiona kicked it. Cans rattled. "It's full," said Fiona. "Twenty cans is a dollar. I bet you there are twenty cans in here, Dad." She picked up the bag and dragged it to her father. "You carry it. Please!"

When they had collected all the cans and bottles they organized the bags. Fiona would carry a partially filled bag and her father would carry two full bags. Crossing the bridge was now more difficult for Fiona because her father, who carried two bags, could not hold her hand. Instead, with her free hand she held onto his wrist as they walked the timbers.

When they arrived at the other end of the bridge she let go of her father's wrist "Dad, he was a nice man."

"Yes, he was."

"We collected most of our cans from his favorite spot. We got two bags full there." She paused and looked at her father, "Do you think the man put those cans there? You know, the ones he collected yesterday. He could've left them there for me. He had two bags full."

"He could have done that."

"He gave me his Christmas money," said Fiona as she took hold of her father's wrist again. He placed both bags in his right hand and took hold of her hand with his left.

As they walked the railway tracks home, he sang their favorite travelling song: "Baa, baa, black sheep have you any wool? Yes, sir! Yes, sir! Three bags full. One for the master, one for the dame...."

Fiona interrupted: "Baa, baa, black sheep have you any cans?"

They laughed.

Jan de Bree is a writer and art buff who lives in Duncan, B.C. His daughter Josina drew the illustrations.



I.D.E.A. Ministries-1996 Programs

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High school sophomores and older teens learn about missions, study Bible and conversational Spanish, do manual labor at seaside Camp Porvenir in Yucatan, southeastern Mexico, and work on town or village church building projects. Ninth year. Program cost: \$395.00, plus air fare and supplies.



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*Carols,
carols,
carols*

Marian Van Til



Carols for choirs

If you'd like to have (or replenish) a collection of Christmas carols to enhance your at-home Christmas preparations and celebration, to listen to or sing with around the house, there is much good stuff available. There are quite literally dozens of excellent carol albums sung by top-notch choirs. The best of these tend to be English choirs (the carol, though initially part of an oral tradition and sung in Latin, is essentially an English musical form).

You can expect good carol singing from (the boys and men of) virtually any English cathedral or church choir, and many of these choirs have made carol recordings: Westminster, Leeds, Chichester, to name a few.

Then, of course there are the famous choirs from both the King's and St. John's College, Cambridge, and their now classic recordings. Trinity College, Cambridge, while less well-known, also has a carol recording I love; it contains 70 minutes of music made up of 27 disparate carols and a few other Christmas pieces ("Carols from Trinity"; Conifer. CDCF 501).

Continued on p. 26...



The Untold Story



Jesus, our Savior, carried by Mary
for forty weeks in her womb;
Did she, the chosen one, already know
his life's path would end in the tomb?

The wee little baby cried for his mother,
hungry, cold, or wet;
She'd calm him, soothe him, snuggle a while
till all his needs were met.

What did she ponder while holding the baby,
knowing she cradled the King?
Watching him wiggle, squirm and crawl,
curious about everything.

Salvation's mystery: God, yet man;
a baby, yet true Lord.
The process of living in order to die,
living to fulfill the Word.

What did he think as he ran through the hills
or climbed sprawling trees with the boys?
As he sat with the family for evening meals,
or played alone with his toys?

While we contemplate details, the story that's written
is all we need to know: GRACE
The Christ-child, the Savior, the ultimate gift,
sacrificed in our place.

Marilyn Loenen
Edmonton, Alta.

A holy space

Outside, the rush-hour pounded and thundered its way homeward. I took the wax paper, lit it with a match, and lit the candle. Because it just happened to be a quiet and thoughtful moment I looked back at it as I walked away.

A candle flame in a large space has a strange contradictory power. It is a tiny thing, but so vivid that it becomes the focus of even a very vast space. It is a very gentle light, yet it is particularly haunting.

Consider an electric bulb. However powerful it be, it is a one-dimensional thing. It provides light, straightforward but barren. It is practical and utilitarian.

Now look at a candle flame. No, look not at, but into a candle flame. That is the difference. There is a slow, languorous movement going on inside it. There are layers to it. Visions form and die and reform as you look. You realize it reflects your life. You dialogue with the flame of a candle in a quiet place.

A lovely verse of a 20th century poem begins: "Like a white candle in a holy place, so is the beauty of an aged face."

A candle in a holy place is more than light. It is a symbol of life beyond life, mystery beyond experience, stillness beyond sound, rest beyond activity. No wonder we reach for a candle flame as a kind of tiny talisman in our search for the divine presence, a kind of "open sesame" to the cave where the god dwells.

*If thy whole body be full of light,
having no part dark,
the whole shall be full of light,
as when the bright shining of a candle
doth give the light.*

Scripture: Luke 11:36.

From a collection of meditations by Herbert O'Driscoll.



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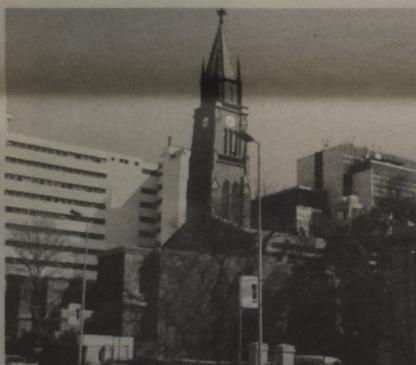
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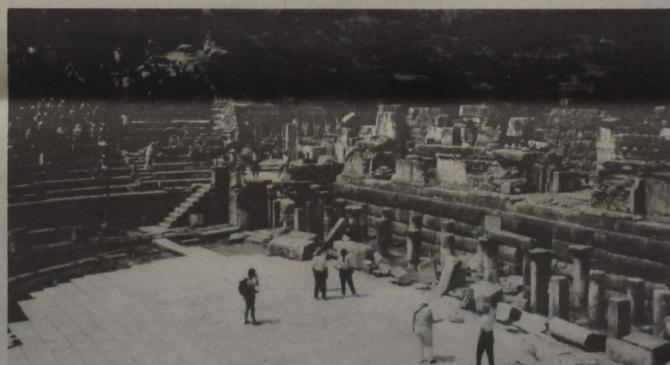
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St. Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai, Egypt



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Theater at ancient Ephesus site, Turkey

Tour Information

Itinerary. Visits to four countries, three continents: Amman, Petra, Mount Nebo, Jerash, Mafraq in Jordan. Sea of Galilee, Capernaum, Nazareth, Mount of Beatitudes, Caesarea, Jerusalem area, Bethlehem, Jericho, Qumran caves, Dead Sea, Masada, Eilat in Israel. Mount Sinai, Suez Canal, Luxor, Cairo and environs in Egypt. Ankara, Göreme, Konya, Antalya, Perga, Pamukkale Izmir, Ephesus, Istanbul in Turkey.

Sponsorship. I.D.E.A. Ministries. The Institute of Holy Land Studies, Jerusalem, provides guidance for Jordan and Israel portions of MEWT 1996.

Air and Land Arrangements. Travel by regularly scheduled airline flights, lodging in distinctive hotels (double occupancy), two meals per day provided.

Documents Needed. Each traveler must have a non-expired valid passport.

Costs. The 25-day tour cost of \$1,995.00 (U.S.) covers land arrangements. Added cost: airport taxes, round trip economy air fare (tentatively: New York \$1,498; Grand Rapids \$1,619; Chicago \$1,729)

Leaders. God willing, MEWT 1996 tour leaders will be Dick and Thea Van Halsema, who have traveled frequently to the Middle East since 1962.

Reservations. Reservations are to be made with I.D.E.A. Ministries as soon as possible, no later than January 25, 1996, along with \$300.00 deposit per person.

For a complete itinerary and other details, and to make a reservation, write or call

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Carols, carols, carols

...continued from page 24

These choirs periodically make new recordings to add to their repertoire — some are just carols, some include other Christmas choral works; others are live recordings of annual Festivals of Nine Lessons and Carols and thus include Scripture readings as well as music. Choosing which one(s) to buy need depend only on scanning a CD's table of contents for the carols you especially like.



If you like a more throaty boys' choir sound, look for recordings by Vienna Boys' Choir or other German boys' choirs.

If you prefer the sound of mixed (female/male) voices, John Rutter's Clare College Choir is ideal. If you like contemporary harmonies and a bit of a beat, you'll probably also like Rutter's own music (he is one of England's most prominent contemporary church composers). If you prefer a less ethereal mixed-choral sound, look for recordings by groups such as the Elmer Iseler Singers, the Vancouver Chamber Choir, the Robert Shaw Chorale or the Greg Smith Singers.

Instruments can sing too

If you'd like just instruments for a change of pace, there are dozens (probably hundreds) of instrumental versions of Christmas carols besides the two by Boyd and Tesh reviewed here. If you like jazzy stuff or soft rock, you may like the material put out by a group called Mannheim Steamroller.

Steamroller now has a whole series of recordings which present Christmas songs and carols and secular seasonal songs in a way which combines classical orchestra instruments with electronic instruments, synthesizers and what have you. The "Mannheim" in the group's name refers to what's known as the Mannheim School of early classical German composers. The "steamroller" is, presumably, the souped-up, full-steam-ahead treatment applied both to the classic instruments and the music itself.



Christmas 1995 — Come quickly, Lord!



It was all so many ages ago
That the prophets foretold and let Israel know
That a Savior would come and set them free
From their sins and sorrows. That is was he
Who was to be their ruler and king,
Who would lead them forever and peace on earth bring.

••• ☀•• ☀••

But then, when he came in that star-filled night,
To be born in that manger, the shepherds in fright
Huddled fearfully, worried — But what did they hear?
The angels told them: "Listen, do not fear!
For tonight, a Savior has been born
For all who believe, and to save those forlorn
In their sorrows and sins." He will set them free,
Our great shepherd-king, born for you and for me.

••• ☀•• ☀••

Now, in this season, we remember his birth.
We sing: Hail, our Savior, the King of the earth.
But when we are looking around us, we see
Not many who share in that happiness we
Here take for granted. There is so much strife,
So many who suffer, whose fate in this life
It seems, are just troubles. Will it ever end?
There are floods, famine, earthquakes. Who can withstand?
Then there are the wars. How many get killed?
It all looks so hopeless. Our stores are still filled
With plenty of food. But for those who die
Of starvation and hunger, there's only a cry
For help and compassion. But who will hear
The cry of those creatures? Is help ever near?

Yes, we here are trying to do what we can
To ease the suffering of our fellow man,
But will it suffice? There's need, always more,
And the agony is deepening as never before.

••• ☀•• ☀••

In that night, long ago, the angels sang out:
Peace on earth to God's children. It rang, clear and loud.
And we, too, sing that song. And we, too, acclaim
That Jesus, our king came to Bethlehem.

••• ☀•• ☀••

But I wonder if this is the song we should sing,
Though we know that that baby is really our King.
Does God tell us that now his children should plead
When around them they see all those troubles and needs,
That they ought to pray always more and more
For the coming of Christ? Not as happened before,
But for his return on that great, final day,
When all that is here now will just pass away.
When the hunger and wars will be no more,
Nor the crying and suffering as before?

••• ☀•• ☀••

Then this earth will be new, new Jerusalem,
With its master and king, born in Bethlehem
In the fullness of time, as it was then God's plan.
He gives us the signs, so should we not then
Pray more urgently: Come, Lord, and hasten the day
When all this old world will just fade away?
When you and your Son will forever reign
In that new earth and heaven, over all that are Thine.
For Thine is the kingdom, the glory, and we
May forever be there, on that new earth with Thee.

••• ☀•• ☀••

Lord, teach us that prayer. Also when we sing
Our praises to you for the Bethlehem king,
Lord, make us eagerly long for that day
When all that is sinful will pass away,
and we, as your children joyful may sing
Praise, hallelujah to our triune King!

Frederick Greidanus
Orillia, Ont.



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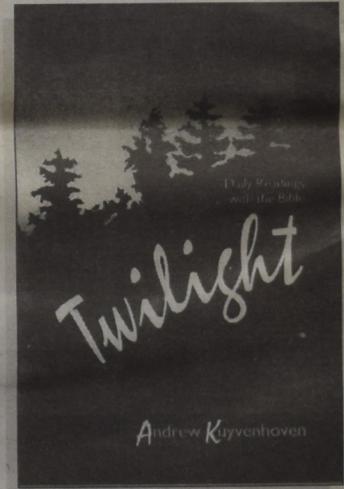


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SPORTS



CC FILES

Rob Janssens

The sad and sudden death of Bruno Gerussi (Nick Adonis) to thousands of Canadians in their 20s who grew up watching "The Beachcombers"), reminded me again how fragile our country's cultural identity is. Of course, we all got a chance to go toe-to-toe with the issue of what makes us Canadian during the recent referendum, but, let's face it, more than Quebec separation would be needed to squeeze the cultural life out of Canada.

No, while Americans can all remember where they were when JFK was shot, the rallying point for most Canadians was, and until something bigger happens — a hockey game: Paul Henderson's series-winning goal against the former U.S.S.R. in the 1972 Canada Cup hockey tournament. That victory asserted Canada's dominance in at least one activity — hockey. And ever since, nothing has occurred that would change our right to profess this fact.

Until now. The recent history of the National Hockey League has given Canadians from Vancouver to Ottawa a cold splash of the new reality in the fight to control "our" sport. The enemy is not the mighty Russians, Swedes, or Czechs; startlingly, that rushing sound you hear is not only that of anglophones flooding out of Quebec, but of hockey players — and franchises — streaming to the U.S.

The Winnipeg Jets (finally)

have been sold, getting Manitoba tax-payers off the hook for \$20 million in team debt. Therefore, not only will the Jets be flying in Phoenix, Arizona, next year, but most Winnipeggers are saying good riddance. Of course, the late Quebec Nordiques franchise is now playing to sell-out crowds in Denver, Colo. So far, though, they're the only part of the province that has left Canada.

A 'Red Sea' of debt

Franchises in Calgary, Edmonton and Ottawa are also swimming in a "Red" Sea of debt, and fans are avoiding these teams' games like a burglar avoids Aline Chretien. The Ottawa Senators can't even sell out their 10,000 seat arena. What will happen when they play in the much larger

Paladium? Players will be able to have private conversations with every fan. In fact, Toronto and Montreal are the only two Canadian NHL franchises which are "sure things" heading into the next millennium. That is ironic, as they were the only two Canadian "Original Six" teams before the 1967 expansion.

Speaking of expansion, where has the league grown? Anaheim (owned by Disney Corp.), Miami (owned by Blockbuster Video Corp.), San Jose, Tampa Bay, and Dallas (formerly the Minnesota franchise), besides Denver. Not exactly the Great White North, eh? Further, future expansion sites will likely include Nashville (which may wind up with the Edmonton Oilers) and Atlanta. In the AHL, Carolina has

been added. If you're a purist (which I'm not, unless it's baseball), you have to feel like your house is being sold from under you.

Americanization of rules

The league executives (now based in New York, no longer Montreal) have been, led by its American commissioner, considering rule changes which would structure it more like basketball. Noises have been made about totally eliminating fighting, which would likely force Don Cherry to seek other employment, and of dividing the game into two halves instead of three periods. There's no reason to believe it won't happen, especially if more Canadian franchises relocate.

Who will stick up for the game's tradition and heritage? Will anyone above the 49th parallel even care in five years?

When the issue of what's hot in America comes up, the proof is found in the TV ratings. Fox-TV will again show weekend day games in the new year. The cable networks ESPN and ESPN2 broadcast three games a week nationally, and beam them to the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Latvia, Sweden, Norway and Slovakia. Meanwhile there have been too many hockey-free nights on TV in the nation that invented the sport.

Finally, a good news/bad news prospect. While the Canada Cup concept will reappear next fall, enabling us to relive the memories of '72, '76,



and '87, when Canada showed the world how to play the game, it will return as the "World Cup." Even though many games will be played here, the country which gave the world this great sport will be excluded from the name of this prestigious tournament.

The ultimate irony

No matter how you feel about these trends, it is important that the league does well in its new venues. And, in what may be the ultimate irony, the revenue brought into the league by U.S. expansion may be the only hope to prop up its weak Canadian franchises. As Oiler's general manager Glen Sather stated recently, "The glory days for small-market hockey teams have come and gone, unless there are big changes, which likely will not happen."

Rob Janssens teaches at Trinity Christian School in Burlington, Ont.

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803 Mrs. Fenna Groen
805 Mr. Alex Visser
807 Mrs. Alice Postma
810 Mrs. Aukje Boersma
811 Mrs. Bertha Smit
812 Cathy Miedema

Floor 7
705 Mrs. F. Hulzebosch
708 Mr. & Mrs. Klaas v.d. Woude
711 Mrs. J. Bisschop-v.d. Zwaag

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601 Mrs. Gerrie Tjoelker
605 Ina Verkaik
606 Mrs. Mien Van Alten
610 Mrs. A. Claus

Floor 5
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502 Mrs. N. Blokzyl
503 Mrs. A. v.d. Heyden
504 Mr. & Mrs. A. Castelein
505 Mrs. C. Farenhorst
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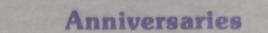
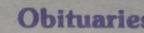
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**Nativity**

Seest thou, my Soule,
with thy faiths eyes,
how he
Which fils all place,
yet none holds him,
doth lye?
Was not his pity
towards thee
wondrous high,
That would have need
to be pittied
by thee?
Kiss him,
and with him
into Egypt goe,
With his kinde mother,
who partakes thy woe.

John Donne

Classifieds

Classified Rates	Adoption	Anniversaries	Anniversaries	Obituaries
<p>(Revised February 1, 1995)</p> <p>Births \$25.00</p> <p>Marriages & Engagements \$40.00</p> <p>Anniversaries \$45.00</p> <p>2-column anniversaries \$90.00</p> <p>Obituaries \$45.00</p> <p>Notes of thanks \$35.00</p> <p>Birthdays \$40.00</p> <p>All other one-column classified advertisements: \$15.00 per column inch. NOTE: Minimum fee is \$15.00. Letter under file number \$35.00 extra. Photos: \$25.00 additional charge.</p> <p>Note: All rates shown above are GST inclusive</p> <p>ATTENTION!</p> <p>a) <i>Christian Courier</i> reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format.</p> <p>b) A sheet with information about an obituary sent by funeral homes is not acceptable since it leads to errors and confusion.</p> <p>c) Photographs sent by fax are not acceptable. If you wish a photo included, send us the original.</p> <p>d) <i>Christian Courier</i> will not be responsible for any errors due to handwritten or phoned-in advertisements.</p> <p>e) The rate shown above for classifieds covers any length up to five column inches. <i>Christian Courier</i> reserves the right to charge for additional column inches at the rate of \$15.00 per column inch (GST incl.).</p> <p>NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS</p> <p>We offer a one-year subscription for only \$25.00 (GST incl.) to the couples whose wedding is announced in the <i>Christian Courier</i> and to the parents of the child whose birth announcement appears in our paper. To facilitate matters, we encourage those who request the wedding or birth announcement to enclose \$25.00 and the couple's correct address.</p> <p>Christian Courier 4-261 Martindale Rd. St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1 Phone: (905) 682-8311 Fax: (905) 682-8313</p>	 <p>VANZEUMEREN/SCHURINGA: We celebrate God's grace and rejoice in His gifts to us through the adoption of:</p> <p>LACIE MAEGAN YVONNE born March 2, 1988</p> <p>ROBERT JOSEPH ROEL born Oct. 26, 1990</p> <p>DANIEL IAIN JERARD born Dec. 14, 1991—and the permanent care of:</p> <p>STEPHANIE LYNNE LANGILLE born June 26, 1982</p> <p>Grandparents are Ralph and Margaret Pyker of Bowmanville, Ont., and John and Gerry VanZeumeren of Bedford, N.S.</p> <p>Address: Randy VanZeumeren/Jessica Schuringa, P.O. Box 590, Elmsdale, NS B0N 1M0</p>	 <p>Congratulations to Trijntje Vander Veen and Aalt Mulder on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary!</p>	 <p>1945 December 19 1995 (TINA) TRIJNTJE VANDER VEEN and (ALLAN) AALT MULDER</p> <p>"Lord, you have been our dwelling place" (Ps.90:1) "Great is Thy faithfulness" (Hymn 556).</p> <p>Congratulations on your 50th anniversary from your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.</p> <p>Andy & Didi Lisa, Brad, Steve, Cherene Peter & Joanne Gloria, Donna, Kamela Clark & Linda Joel, Randi Meeka & Miles Claude & Karrie (Bradley, Claudey) Reg & Sylvia Melissa, Jeremy, Brent, Tyler, Denise Casey Joyce & Fred Brandon, Jason, Tyler</p> <p>Home address: 9593 Creditview Road, R.R. #2, Brampton, ON L6V 1A1, (905) 455-8210.</p>	 <p><i>Safe in the arms of Jesus</i> July 7, 1933 - Nov. 19, 1995</p> <p>We express our deepest sympathy and love to our dear sister Lita Hofing and family with the sudden passing of her husband and the children's father and grandfather</p> <p>PETER HOFING of Athens, Ont. Much loved son-in-law of Fred and Grace Postma of St. Catharines, Ont. Brother-in-law of: Bill Andringa — Victoria, B.C. Andy & Edith Veerman — Lansdowne, Ont. Gary & Brenda Postma — Carleton Place, Ont. Tom & Lucille Postma — Levack, Ont. Gordon & Ali Postma — Addison, Ont. Bill & Karen Winkelhorst — Brighton, Ont. Ben & Cathy Wagter — Dunnville, Ont. Ted & Diane Postma — Winger, Ont. Clarence & Annette VanderHeide — St. Catharines, Ont. Jeff & Patty Postma — Guelph, Ont. and many nieces and nephews.</p>
<p>Births</p> <p>HOEKSTRA: Lindsay and Lauren are proud to announce the arrival of their baby brother</p> <p>BENJAMIN JEREMY HOEKSTRA Eileen gave birth to Benjamin on Oct. 8, 1995, at 1:08 p.m. at K-W Hospital with Rick providing moral support.</p> <p>Bragging right belong to Bill and Betty Hoekstra (18th grandchild), and John and Margaret Middeljans (5th grandchild).</p> <p>The Lord continues to bless us with his miracles.</p>	<p>ONE TO ANOTHER Christian companion magazine. Hundreds of readers Canada-wide. Single issue \$5.</p> <p>Write to: #302, 1502-2nd Ave. S. Lethbridge, AB T1J 4A2</p> <p>Dutch Canadian lady, early fifties, southern Ontario, enjoys theatre, concerts, spending quality time at home, would like to meet Christian gentleman with similar interests. Please write to: File #2637, c/o Christian Courier, 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1.</p> <p>For Rent</p> <p>Apartment for rent. Private; over separate garage in park-like setting. Jordan, Ont., area. Kitchen with appliances, living room, one bedroom, 3-piece bath. Available Dec. 1, 1995. Phone (905) 562-7464 or (905) 562-5232.</p>	<p>Job Opportunities</p> <p>Director of Congregational Life and Youth The Chr. Ref. Church, Aylmer, Ont., is seeking applicants for a full-time associate pastor (ordained or lay person). Job description and brief profile of our congregation available upon request. Send letters of inquiry to Ed Weesjes, R.R. #3, St. Thomas, ON N5P 3S7. Phone (519) 631-6004.</p>	<p>For Rent</p> <p>BERGENTHEIM TE HUUR VOOR VAKANTIE: Moderne gemeubileerde woning (modern furnished home) — per week of per maand — in Bergentheim, Overijssel (ongeveer 12 km van Ommen). Voor volledige informatie bel of schrijf naar:</p> <p>J. Snijders 651-4 Ave. E. Brooks, AB T1R 0H4 Phone: (403) 362-4052 or (403) 362-2653</p>	<p>Christian Reformed Church</p> <p>Calls declined: — To Maranatha, Bowmanville, John Luth of First, Barrie, Ont.</p>

Classifieds

Job Opportunities	Teachers	Teachers	Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous
<p>Wanted: A motivated individual required for a profitable home-base service in the Kent/Essex/Lambton area. Minimum investment approx. \$4,500.</p> <p>For more info. contact Dick at 1-800-351-6160 or Fax (519) 354-7670. Fibrenew Industries.</p>	<p>WOODBRIDGE, ONT.: A maternity leave position is available at TORONTO DISTRICT CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL beginning January 29, 1996. The courses involved are: Physical Science grade 10 or Canadian History grade 10, Old Testament grade 10, Physical Education grade 11 with some coaching responsibilities. Please send transcripts, resume and letter of inquiry to:</p> <p>Ren Siebenga, c/o Toronto Distr. Chr. High School 377 Woodbridge Ave., Woodbridge, ON L4L 2S8.</p> <p>A decision on this position will be made December 15, 1995.</p>	<p>BOWMANVILLE, ONT.: Knox Christian school invites applications for a grade 6 teaching position commencing possibly January 8, 1996 or May 1, 1996. Interested, qualified applicants should submit letter of application, references, and resume as soon as possible to:</p> <p>Bill Helmus, Principal Knox Christian School 410 Scugog St., R.R. 1, Bowmanville, ON L1C 3K2 School: (905) 623-5871 Home: (905) 623-6952 Fax: (905) 623-8877</p>	<p>Canada</p>	<p>the Netherlands</p> <p>HOME EXCHANGE</p> <p>Former residents of Edmonton, Alta., wishing to revisit their previous home town, are asking for a home exchange, with a family from Edmonton/Red Deer/Calgary or in between, for a period of three weeks, last week of June and first two weeks of July 1996. We would like to come with another couple. Our home in Bolsward, Friesland, will accommodate two couples or home in Ee, Friesland (close to Dokkum). Car must be part of exchange. Please provide alternate address for reference. Will do likewise.</p> <p>Please write: Pieter van der Zee, De Nes 4, 8701 LE Bolsward, Friesland, the Netherlands.</p> <p>Phone: 011-31-515-574740</p>
<p>Auto Repair Technician needed for a busy four-bay garage in the Hamilton, Ont. area. Preferably, eight years minimum experience required. Must know A.C. work, fuel injection and related diagnostics. Propane experience an asset but is not necessary. Good wages with benefits in place. Pleasant working environment. Please send resume and references to: RYCKMAN'S AUTO SERVICE & SALES Ltd., att. Jack L.Dam, 2350 Hwy #6, Mount Hope, ON L0R 1W0.</p>	<p>Miscellaneous</p>			
<p>CAMPUS CHAPLAIN: The Brock University Christian Reformed Chaplaincy Committee seeks applications for a possible position as campus chaplain commencing in the summer of 1996. We are seeking an ordained person but will consider an unordained person with an appropriate masters degree or higher. The successful candidate will be self-motivated, disciplined, possess good organizational and counselling skills, and be able to relate his or her Christian beliefs in an academic environment and in conformity with Brock's policy on campus ministries. If you are interested in this challenging position located in St.Catharines, Ontario, please send your resume and a short statement of your vision for campus ministry by January 1, 1996, to: John Teeuwsen, Secretary, Campus Ministry Committee of Clasis Niagara, CRCNA, 2 Eden Drive, St.Catharines, ON L2R 6B2, phone: (905) 682-9127 evenings.</p>	<p>Hollands of Engels</p> <p>HOMELIFE Benchmark REALTY CORP</p> <p>Andy Driesen</p> <p>200-32500 South Fraser Way, Abbotsford, BC V2T 4W1</p> <p>Bus: (604) 853-7144 Fax: (604) 853-1839 Res: (604) 854-1560</p> <p>"Serving the Fraser Valley"</p> 	<p>REDEEMER COLLEGE</p> <p>REDEEMER COLLEGE R.I.F.'s</p> <p>✓ A Redeemer College RIF (Retirement Income Fund) earns 7.45% interest, compounded semi-annually.*</p> <p>✓ To help us pay down our bank debt, we invite you to open an account with us now.</p> <p>✓ For information, call toll free:</p> <p>1-800-263-6467.</p> <p><small>*Determined in January & July of each year in relation to the Consumer Price Index</small></p> <p>777 Hwy. 53 E., Ancaster, ON, L9K 1J4, (905) 648-2131</p>		
<p>Teachers</p>	<p>Season's Greetings</p> <p>We thank you for your patronage during 1995.</p> <p>New address: The Music Group 5205 Harvester Road, Unit 2 Burlington, ON L7L 6B5</p> <p>Tel./Fax (905) 631-1929 Toll Free 1-800-376-7199</p> <p>CONTENT DIGITAL SAMPLING ORGANS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DUTCH CD's & TAPES • PIANO & ORGAN LESSONS • SHEET MUSIC • ALSO PIANOS <p>NEW Full size digital sampling organs - \$6,995.00</p> <p>Tel. (905) 631-1929 or 1-800-376-7199</p> <p>THE MUSIC GROUP Willem Van Suydam, General Manager</p> <p>5205 Harvester Rd., Unit 2, Burlington, ON L7L 6B5 Open daily. Appointment preferred.</p>	<p>Don't Forget...</p> <p>It's time to extend Christmas and/or New Year's greetings through C.C.</p> <p>Starting with the Christmas issue (December 8), and continuing with the December 15 and 22 issues, we plan to reserve a special section in the classified pages for your season's greetings. Deadline for the Christmas issue is November 29! Kindly formulate your greetings to family and friends now (the message should not exceed 40 words) and send it in today, enclosing payment of \$20.00 as well.</p> <p>Forget the fuss of cards and postage stamps; one ad does it all!</p> <p>Christian Courier 4-261 Martindale Road, St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1 Fax your message to us! Our fax number is: (905) 682-8313</p> 		

Classifieds

Miscellaneous

Miscellaneous

Miscellaneous

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Phone: 416-598-2181 or 1-800-267-8890.

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Address: _____

(postal code) _____

Birthdate: _____ (month/day/year) Second person's birthdate (if applicable) _____ (month/day/year)



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